

SHORT STORIES

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No. 11.—MACQUARRIE.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 768.]

Week Ending September 19th, 1903.

[ONE PENNY.]



A MODERN MARTYR.

The Story of a Jealous Man's Revenge.

ONE evening from out a side and almost secret entrance of a palatial mansion, situated in the aristocratic part of St. Petersburg, came a figure.

This figure, low and somewhat thick-set, hurried through deserted byways, to the business portion of the city. Here the lights disclosed in the pedestrian a man, in appearance of about seventy-five years of age.

Despite his sturdy, compact form, the hair that fell upon his collar was white, and with the black, bushy eyebrows that overhung the darkly-smoked glasses protecting the eyes, gave a somewhat extraordinary expression to the dark countenance.

His gait grew less swift and even laggard; but as he strolled along the thoroughfares those keen eyes behind the spectacles swept a constant, searching regard upon every face he met, as one fearing detection.

At length he paused upon the corner of a narrow street and swept another of those piercing glances about him; then, apparently satisfied, darted down the passageway, which was scarcely more than an alley, and eventually disappeared.

Just then another figure was seen, evidently following the white-haired man. In stature he was deformed, and of less height than a child of twelve years old, though the head, even for a figure of fine proportions, was immense.

He stood motionless, that bushy, gigantic head thrust slightly forward, about him something to suggest the ferocious, half-baffled expectancy of a bloodhound lost to its trail. Then he proceeded down the alley-way, walking slowly in the shadow of the houses, his sharp, fierce eyes piercing the gloom like fiery meteors.

Not a human object met his sight. The hour was now growing late, the way was deserted, the frowning fronts of the residences owned by tradesmen presented uncompromising darkness, not a light being visible.

A muttered oath broke from the lips of the disappointed pursuer, and, after standing irresolute for a few minutes, he started for the more populous portion of the city, where, jumping into a closed carriage waiting, bearing upon its panels the escutcheon of a noble family, he was driven to a castle in the outskirts of the capital.

Here, alighting and ringing the bell, he was admitted by an obsequious porter, and, without waiting for directions or invitation, made his way to a certain door through which,

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after a brief, imperative knock, he entered to the apartment within.

This chamber, of great size and elegance, was occupied by two ladies of aristocratic bearing—evidently mother and daughter.

As the hunchback entered, the elder lady rose and advanced to meet him, with suppressed eagerness in her look and manner. He made an impatient gesture towards their companion. The mother turned.

"Olga," she said, "your

uncle has some business with me; leave us alone for the present."

The girl rose and withdrew, after first formally bowing to the visitor, to whom the Princess Artoff now again turned.

"Well?" she said, with suppressed excitement.

A malicious smile came across the man's lips.

"My dear sister-in-law," he said, "I regret that I have no pleasant intelligence to impart."

A smothered exclamation of disappointment escaped the lady.

In the light of the hundred tapers certain features in her companion that the darkness had concealed, now became visible; but at midnight or noonday he could be nothing but a monstrosity.

His cloak thrown aside showed his distorted but thick-set figure to be richly dressed. But inhuman and revolting as was his form, his countenance, developed to its normal condition, strange to say, was to a certain degree handsome, though it bore a bitter expression.

No one in St. Petersburg was more noted for dissipation and every kind of excess, than the dwarfed Prince d'Artoff, the last heir of his race. But though physically dwarfed, his spirit, intellect, passions, had developed to an abnormal degree, and all pandered to the evil he seemed to revel in.

Crossing the room he flung himself upon a divan—his sister-in-law seated herself in a chair before him.

"Yes," he continued, "I have again been unsuccessful. Not trusting to our lackeys, I, as usual, followed the figure, and as usual it disappeared almost before my very eyes. What became of it I am not prepared to say. But I swear I will solve the mystery!"

"But are you sure that you are not mistaken in the identity?" said the woman eagerly.

"As sure as I am that that haughty, unbending girl shall yield to my power," returned the other, through his shut teeth. "I followed the person from a back entrance of Ivan Drasky's residence to the lonely and humble locality it nightly seeks.

"I cannot be mistaken in that bull-like form, that shuffling gait. They are his—it is Ivan Drasky in disguise. And why this concealment, if there is not some mystery in his life?"

"True. But for years he has been a wealthy and respected citizen of St. Petersburg, though somewhat noted for parsimony in his dealings."

"He is a mean, sordid cur, with money for a girl, despite

all. And there is a dark page in his life that I will turn before the season dies," muttered the prince.

A look of anxiety and impatience was in his companion's countenance. She had risen and was pacing the tiled floor of the luxurious room.

"There is little time to lose," she said, in a suppressed voice. "If there is anything in this man's history that will give you control of him, you must know it soon, or we must abandon ourselves to failure—you to losing a wife, I a fortune.

"The marriage of Ilma Drasky to my nephew, Count Karl Petroff, will undoubtedly take place in a few weeks. By the will of that madman—my brother and his father—not a kopeck of his immense fortune reverts to me unless Karl attains his fortieth birthday unmarried, in which case I can claim half. There are yet four years before I shall be safe.

"My child is comparatively poor—Karl immensely rich, aside from his inheritance. I always thought Olga safe since her cousin has lived to this age in celibacy. But, despite all his pride and coldness, he has succumbed at last. If we could place a barrier between him and this daughter of Drasky, all would be well. Men like him never love but once."

"He is a distinguished statesman, wedded, until he knew Ilma, to the good of his country. But though the girl, rich as her father is, is far beneath him in social status, he will marry her so long as she and her father bear the respectable reputation they now possess; but cast some shadow upon them, make it a disgrace to give his proud old name into her keeping, and I will have my fortune, and you will rob him of the girl you love."

A look of passion and malevolence swept the dwarf's countenance. He sprang up, stamping his foot savagely. In his fury he looked like an ogre.

"I do love her!" he cried, "despite her haughty refusal of my hand, her scorn, her loathing, that she makes no effort to conceal—through it all my love has lived! But I swear, though she may never be mine, neither shall she marry the man of her choice. There *must* be some way to thwart them."

"Old Drasky has long aroused my suspicions. For what purpose is he disguised? What business takes him to this humble, almost disreputable, neighbourhood every night?"

"I dare never go near enough to him to see the exact house in which he disappears, for his eyes are so keen. But I have repeatedly sent servants to investigate the business of the inhabitants, and find that the street is composed of tradespeople, poor, ignorant, and above suspicion. Yet I swear there is a mystery connected with old Ivan."

Princess Artoff paused in her rapid walk and stood before him.

"Artoff," she said sharply, "it may be that he is a Nihilist."

"I myself have thought of that possibility," returned the other moodily. "But there is not man enough in him to take the risk—not soul enough to share sentiment—not generosity enough to sympathise with any object or principle unconnected with his self-interest. No—he is not a Nihilist. Would to Heaven he were—if we could prove it against him! Petroff at the head of the Government, and faithful statesman that I admit he is, would never dare—however much his heart might plead for her—connect himself with a daughter of a Nihilist."

"Then what is he?" cried the woman in despair.

"As yet I am not prepared to answer. Give me time. Such impatience will ruin all."

A few days later, in her father's mansion stood Ilma Drasky. Ivan, her parent, though bearing an unblemished reputation, was, nevertheless, well known to be miserly in his dealings with everyone but himself and daughter, silent and unsocial.

It was, therefore, a source of universal wonder that he could be the father of a girl whose reputation throughout the city bore indisputable evidence of her beauty, both of mind and person.

Highly educated and accomplished, amiable in disposition, and generous of soul, this daughter of the house of Drasky was the perfection of womanhood. In stature, unlike Ivan, she was tall and unexceptionally graceful.

Her complexion, soft, creamy, was colourless save for the scarlet lips, around which was a peculiarly pensive curve, as though her nature were slightly predisposed to melancholy.

Her features were straight and clear-cut as a cameo's; her eyes, large, black, lustreless, but soul-filled, and the heavy silken hair growing low down upon the forehead was of the same rich hue.

She was standing at a window, looking down into the street, when a pair of arms were wound tightly around her waist, and, turning suddenly, she came face to face with her lover.

One glance into that proud, stern, countenance, now abandoned to the rapture of his passion, was sufficient to show the intensity of love that had at last swept the proud nature of the statesman.

A look of delight illumined the great, shadowy orbs of the girl as she fondly greeted him.

"I scarcely expected to be with you before evening," said the count, his arms still tight about her. "But there being a recess, I stole a few minutes from the palace to come to my beloved." Then, while a swartly flush stained his countenance, and his embrace grew closer about her: "In a little while, Ilma, you will be always with me—morning, noon, night. Oh! how infinitely blessed will be that time!"

A faint flush had stolen into the girl's lovely face, but she reached up her arms and laid them about his throat.

"I can scarcely believe my great happiness," she murmured.

"You, so great and noble, and distinguished—how is it you seek me, so lowly, when the proudest ladies of the land could be yours for the asking?"

"Flatterer!" he said gaily; but almost instantly his manner became characterised by a tender gravity, and, putting her gently from him, regarded her with fond admiration.

"Shall I tell you, love, why I sought you? It was because the first time I ever saw you my senses yielded to your matchless beauty—because after I grew to know you better I beheld in you everything high and noble to captivate the soul—because, when St. Petersburg, already ringing with the fame of your loveliness, grew wild with enthusiasm over your bravery in snatching with your own hands the shell from under the imperial carriage waiting for the Tsar, and never relinquishing the deadly burden until all danger for the Emperor was over, I said to my soul: 'That is the wife for me, and mine she shall be if only I can win her.' For, my darling, the Petroffs of St. Petersburg have always been warriors and statesmen."

"The women of their love have ever had but one rival to fear, and that is—Russia. Therefore, in selecting wives the utmost discrimination was necessary, so that no ill-assorted union would shackle their duty and retard their labour for their country. For this reason so many of my race have lived and died unmarried."

"But the wives that have been among us were brave, self-sacrificing women, without a shadow to taint the glory of their memory. And you—I say it honestly—are worthy of your predecessors. For I believe you are too noble and patriotic to be jealous of that which in the heart of every true statesman must be first, even beyond wife and children—his country!"

As she listened her countenance had kindled with his enthusiasm—the lofty spirit in her that was made for martyrs irradiated her eyes.

"Jealous of Russia!" she said, softly. "Never! I am her true daughter; and my husband"—another soft flush that made him draw her again into his arms—"shall be given to her service in time of peace as well as of war."

At this juncture, after some discreet difficulty in opening the door, Drasky entered, and respectfully greeted his intended son-in-law.

In complexion he was dark almost to swarthy, though his hair was of light brown. But his eyes, keen, piercing, restless—true insight into his sharp and avaricious temperament—were black as sloes.

With all his greed, if any man ever adored his child, that man was Ivan, as his glance now resting on the queenly woman testified; and it was an adoration as completely reciprocated by its object.

But, despite the alterations in his appearance, any person who had keenly observed that disguised figure pursued by the dwarfed Prince a few nights previously could not fail to recognise its proportions and gait in the man now standing before his daughter and her lover.

At this moment a commotion in the street attracted their attention. Looking out, a miserable spectacle met their view.

In the middle of the street, like pack-horses, came a wretched crowd, composed of men, women, and children, the paths of human suffering and soul despair in their heavy, dark faces.

There were old men and women treading with trembling steps the rough flagstones of this city which had known their youth and rejected their age. There were sturdy fathers, leading by the hand little ones whose tired eyes roamed in sad wonder upon their surroundings. There were heart-broken mothers cradling in their arms the infants too young to know misfortune, yet none the less homeless and friendless.

There was youth, robbed of its lightness, and branded with the stigma of disgrace, while after all came the merciless mob, howling, gibing, stoning, and up to that luxurious chamber floated fierce cries of the people casting reproaches on them.

Ilma shrank away from the window with a low cry, and covered her face with her hands.

Count Petroff's countenance softened in the sternness that had seized it at sight of that wretched herd outside, as he witnessed her emotion, and he gently took down her hands.

"What is it, Ilma?" he asked slowly, looking at her searchingly.

She made a gesture towards the street, but withdrew still further from the window.

"Poor, miserable unfortunates!" she murmured, in an unsteady voice. "I cannot but pity them, erring though I know them to be."

"A dog were more deserving of your pity, sweet one," he said, tenderly, though in his voice there was a stern sincerity. He was the lover no longer, but the statesman. "The wife of a Petroff must have no sympathy with the Jews. The people are driving that race from the city—not the rulers; but it is right and just."

"The Jew, in the eyes of a Russian, is a rank rebel, an oppressor, a devourer of every right and liberty, an absorber of every privilege, but as ungrateful as a carrion-bird, and deserves to be driven from every Christian community. However secret his identity, his mere existence contaminates and breeds pestilence!"

She had somewhat recovered her composure, though in her heart there was a dull pain that suffering always occasioned.

That horrible procession had now passed, though the din and roar of the shouting populace, softened by space, still floated up to them like the distant thunders of surging billows.

By chance at this moment her glance fell upon her father. His face was colourless, his eyes, wild, horrified, were fixed upon her in a look that lingered with her for days.

She made as if she would spring towards him, but he made a forbidding, almost warning gesture, and glancing once at Petroff, turned and went out of the room.

Pained and mystified, Ilma stood silent, marvelling as to the cause of that agonised look in her father's eyes. Was it possible that he had recognised a friend among those Jewish refugees?

Soon, with many a tender word and fond caress, Petroff left her to return to state duties, and she was alone, with the memory of Ivan's strange expression to share her solitude.

That evening she attended a state ball, escorted by her lover. As he was assisting her from the carriage in the gleam of the thousand lamps, some power seemed to draw her attention to the carriage standing in front of her own.



Petroff and Ilma looked out of the window and saw the howling, frantic mob passing by. The girl was moved to compassion for them. "They are not worthy of your pity" said the Count.

Looking towards it, she met the gaze of a pair of eyes, burning with fierce hate, passion, and desire, and caught the glimpse of a burly, misshapen form, whose hideous shape even the many priceless furs in which it was wrapped could not entirely conceal.

The girl shuddered and shrank closer to her lover's side. Ever watchful and abiding as was his love, Petroff noted the involuntary gesture of his beloved, and looked down at her in tender questioning.

"It is that horrible Prince Artoff," she explained slowly. "The expression in his eyes affects me strangely. And I meet him so often that it would seem as though he followed me."

Petroff's face flushed with displeasure.

"The coward!" he muttered, tightening his clasp on the small hand resting upon his arm. "If I thought so, I would wring the degraded life out of him. I always feel like shooting him when I think of his presumption in offering himself to you, my queen and idol!"

As Ivan Drasky, disguised for his nightly trip, was admitting himself with a secret key to the house to which under such circumstances he always repaired, a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder. Trembling all over, he turned and confronted the burly figure of his captor, beside whom stood a short, humped form he knew too well. It was this latter who spoke.

"Ivan Drasky," said those sneering, malicious tones, "your cause is lost—I have pierced to your well-guarded secret."

The quaking man made a miserable attempt at recovering his composure.

"What mean you, your Highness?" he queried, in accents he vainly essayed to steady.

Even in the dusk of the gloomy street the malicious gleam of the dwarf's fiery eyes was visible. He stretched up towards Ivan and uttered a few low, mysterious words.

From the miserable man broke a shriek of fear and horror, and he would have dropped to the flagstones had not his captor forcibly sustained him.

"It's false! It's a lie to ruin me!" he again shrieked, now struggling desperately with the detaining grasp.

A jeering, malicious laugh broke from the dwarf.

"Take me into the back rooms of this house, friend Ivan, and I will prove the truth of my assertions," he sneered.

"Never!" groaned the trembling, unhappy man, endeavouring to seize the key for the purpose of concealing it.

"Admit me," thundered his foe, "or I will sound the alarm, raise a mob, and when the truth of you is known, you will be seized by it and treated as a mad cur!"

Almost panic-stricken, the old man unlocked the door and led the way to a suite of rooms whose furniture and contents but corroborated the fatal secret now in the possession of his enemy.

"Now do you deny it?" sneered Artoff triumphantly.

Resistance, denial, were worthless. The detected man flung himself upon the floor at the feet of the dwarf, crying aloud for mercy.

"Spare me!" he moaned. "Take my houses, my gold, my everything I possess, but keep my secret for my child's sake."

The dwarf's face had grown more evil and more triumphant. "You can buy my silence with but one price—give me your daughter."

Again that wild shriek broke from the wretched father. "Oh, for Heaven's sake! My child, my beautiful Rachel. I cannot—you know she is betrothed to Count Petroff."

"I will hear her answer from her own lips," sneered the dwarf. "And for that purpose will go to her at once."

Ivan caught desperately at his foe, who, however, eluded him and went his way.

He immediately sought Drasky's residence. By dint of bribing the servants, Artoff succeeded in gaining admittance to the hall.

How lovely she looked in the gleam of the burning tapers. Around her elegant figure fell the rich folds of her crimson velvet gown; her throat and arms bare, and like columns of

rarest marble, were adorned with strings of rubies and amber; in her small ears were jewels of the same. Her head carried high, like one used to wearing a crown, was destitute of ornament save for the heavy braids of purple-black hair coiled low on the neck.

As the dwarf stood regarding this dazzling vision his face grew more evil, in his eyes deepened that look of vast desire and vindictive triumph.

"This is an unexpected visit, Prince," she observed, haughtily, "and, I might even add, undesired on my part. Have you business with me?"

"I have, madam," returned the guest. "Important business, if you will grant me an interview."

He wheeled up his chair before her and climbed into it.

"Probably you can surmise the business that brings me again into your presence," he began. "I once offered you my hand in marriage, which you refused. Since then circumstances have transpired that may induce you to change your mind. Therefore I have sought you to-night to repeat my offer."

She partially sprang to her feet in her angry excitement; then, controlling herself, sank back upon the divan. But her countenance, grand, proud as an outraged queen's, testified to her indignation at his persistency.

"I told you then that I had but one answer to give to your suit," she replied slowly but haughtily. "And I tell you now no time or change of circumstances can alter that answer."

"You again refuse my offer?"

His evil countenance had grown fiercer and threatening.

"I do, once and for ever."

For a minute Artoff's rage was too great to allow him speech. His eyes, like a basilisk's, dwelt upon the splendid beauty he coveted as though he would wipe it out for ever.

"Listen to me, madam," he at last hissed through his clinched teeth. "You shall marry me or I will cover your name with infamy. Take your choice between being my wife or the gibe, the ridicule, the horror of the people. Your destiny is in my hands—not only yours, but your father's, and a more wretched one woman never had, if you tempt me to do my worst."

This time she sprang to her feet in uncontrollable passion—her eyes flashed fire.

At this moment Count Petroff was shown into the apartment. At one glance he took in the scene—with one spring he reached the side of the woman he adored, and his eyes, gleaming with a lion's wrath, fixed upon the miserable object before them.

"Ah, Count," said Artoff, with insufferable insolence, "you are come in time. I was about to enlighten your betrothed upon one or two little matters upon which she is either really ignorant or has wilfully deceived you. Are you aware, my lord, that she to whom you are betrothed comes of that despicable race—that long ere this, had the world but pierced to the hideous secret her hound of a father has so well concealed, she would have been driven with lash and stone to join the herd of her infamous people? Are you aware, sir count, that *you* are the betrothed of the daughter of a Hebrew?"

For a moment there was an intense hush, the girl standing dazed and bewildered. But in the next her lover leapt towards the dwarf as one wild beast springs upon another.

"Traitor!" he cried, in fierce passion, catching the hunchback by the throat, "take back those words, or I will wring the wretched, craven life out of you!"

"Truth can never truce," returned the other doggedly. "And if you doubt the truth of my accusation, look at the face of that Hebrew—you may be convinced."

All eyes turned towards Ivan, who had just staggered into the room. One glance at the wild, ashen countenance was sufficient to establish the miserable truth.

For an instant the magnificent strength of Petroff failed under the frightful blow. He reeled back against the wall.

Then he recovered himself with an effort. With a look of murder in his maddened eyes, he turned to Artoff, pointing to the door; and, not daring to disobey, the dwarf slunk out.



He sprang forward and caught the hunchback by the throat.

Not until then did Ilma, standing like a statue of despair, move or speak. Now she turned to Ivan, who, with his head buried in his hands, crouched in a chair.

"Father," she cried, "is this thing true?"

Ivan lifted his head—a look of rage had swept into his countenance.

"It is," he shrieked.

Ilma sank down upon a divan and lifted her blanched, agonised face to her lover. Between the two—but now so supremely blest in their love—had come a yawning precipice that no time or circumstance could bridge. No more in all the world could they be aught to one another.

"It was for your sake, Rachel, that I did it," continued the father, and the girl shuddered as that name of miserable significance fell upon her ear. "Your mother died at your birth, and from that hour the love I bore her has been lavished upon her child.

"Ah, Rachel"—he seemed to experience a morbid pleasure in calling her by that name—"forgive your father, when you think that it is for your sake I have sinned and deceived, turning apostate to the faith of my forefathers. I could not bear that you, equal in beauty and intellect to the proudest in the land, should grow to womanhood, banned from your birth.

"I foresaw this persecution of the chosen of Israel—I looked ahead and saw this day when the Hebrew martyrs are stoned through the streets, and driven from the land of their birth. How could I endure that you should suffer this doom? I had wealth, you growing in beauty and intelligence, and I swore to give you from the fate of your people.

"I accordingly removed from Hungary, where we were then living, and with only the disguise of a light wig which I have always worn, and the assumed name of Drasky, began

a new life in St. Petersburg. You both know how successful it has been. I saw you lifted from out the shadow of your birth into the beautiful sunlight in which I had hoped ever to keep you.

"For years, disguised by wigs, spectacles, and paint, I carried on the business of a pawnshop in one of the poor localities of this city, thus adding to the wealth which I was treasuring for you. But when the hatred and rank prejudice became so strong against the Hebrews, I was compelled to close my establishment.

"Fortunately I, under the name of Isaacs, owned the house and was thus enabled to lock up the premises with the stock concealed within. This I intended by degrees to remove to our house, and for the purpose of making preparations went there every night. Though some means that fiendish dwarf pierced to my secret, and all is lost!"

He ended with a groan and again buried his face in his trembling hands.

Again old Ivan lifted his head, his eyes piteous, shrinking, sought his child.

"Do you hate me—do you treasure wrath?" he queried piteously. "Ah! Rachel, child of my dead Rebecca, my whole life has been devoted to you—turn not against me."

She rose, crossed with a steady step to her father, and put her arm around his neck, in a gentle, infinite protection.

"While life last we will cling together," she said, her head reared with the grandeur of immolation. "In all the world we have but one another; on the face of the earth we are wanderers and Pariahs. We will go together.

The Count, standing alone, bent his head upon the marble mantel, and the bitter, scalding tears of a proud man's intolerable anguish dropped one by one upon the cold stone.

And now up from the street came a sound that caused him to lift his head—that sent in his heavy, despairing eyes a look of wild fear and horror. Nearer and nearer it came, that hoarse, dull roar of an angry populace, until it resolved itself into furious shrieks and yells and curses. Petroff leapt towards the father and daughter.

"It is the mob!" he cried. "That dwarfish fiend has sounded the alarm. Oh, for God's sake! Could not even this have been spared us? Fly! Conceal yourselves! You might expect more mercy from a pack of wolves. Hide somewhere while I deal with them, and as soon as I can I will seek and take care of you."

"Get up," Petroff cried fiercely to Ivan. "Will you give your daughter to the mob? My carriage is at the side entrance—try to reach it and drive straight to the castle."

Ivan sat like one paralyzed. Brave and pale, his daughter stood above him, like a prophetess of old, her eyes steady and shining with a great courage, her head held high.

"It is too late," she said to her lover. "The rubble are already in the house. To defend us will be to ruin you—only God can befriend us. Leave the house."

But he never moved. And now at last the shouts of the people, the tramp of their feet in the beautiful chambers they were ravishing and destroying, the loud shattering of marble, the heavy crash of broken furniture, roused Ivan, and he sprang to his feet with a shriek of terror.

But at this moment into the chamber came that hooting, mad throng. Even the presence of the most powerful statesman of the day could not restrain them. They swept in between Petroff and the Jews, despite the maddened, desperate resistance of the former.

A wild, maddened cry broke from the Count, and he flung himself among the throng, but he was powerless.

With all his fame, fortune, power, what could he do for her—this poor, unhappy daughter of a usurer? Absolutely nothing! Where he stood a hoarse, choking sob broke in his throat, and he fell face downward upon the floor in unconsciousness.

A week later, a shipload of refugees sailed for America; Ivan and his daughter were among them.

Ilma, brave girl, unflinchingly faced the new life into which she was entering.

Annie J. Duffell.



A Romantic Marriage.

Telling of a Highland Love Affair.

On the shores of one of Scotland's most beautiful lochs a fisher-lad and a girl stood together. It was an ideal spot for a love idyll; the rippling waters, surrounded by the grand mountain scenery, made the most perfect setting for a romance.

The lovers were as perfect in their way as the scenery. The man was as handsome as a young Apollo, browned by the sun and full of manly vigour which redeemed his beauty from offensiveness.

The girl was tall, graceful as a young sapling, with a wild-rose bloom on her lovely little face, and eyes the exact colour of the wild hyacinth, fringed with long dark lashes that matched her curling hair.

The man was talking eagerly, while the girl was listening silently, but presently he broke off abruptly, kissed his companion, and went away along the shore. The girl stood lost in a reverie from which she was aroused presently by a fresh girlish voice.

"Meg!" it called.

The girl looked round quickly and glanced from the face behind her to the figure of the fisherman still visible in the distance.

"Dolly!" she exclaimed, "Dolly—you saw——"

Dolly was a slim overgrown child of fifteen; in a short cotton frock, and with her bright hair flowing over her shoulders.

"Yes, Meg," she answered simply.

"What did you see—exactly?"

"I saw young Sinclair kiss you," said Dolly straightforwardly. Dolly was always straightforward. It was her great charm to some people, her most irritating quality to others.

Meg sat down on a rock and pulled her cousin down beside her.

"It's all right, child," she said lightly, "I'm going to marry Angus Sinclair."

"Oh, I wouldn't, Meg," she said in her awkward school-girl diction, but her tone was eloquent.

"Why not? Aunt Mary won't mind. She'd be glad to get rid of me anyhow, and so would May."

Dolly was silent. She knew that her mother and sister disliked the high-spirited, beautiful, poor relation whom circumstances had brought under their roof, and only a distinct promise to her dying husband that she would afford a home to his brother's orphan daughter prevented Mrs. Conyngham from turning the girl out.

"Mother won't like it, though," Dolly jerked out after a pause.

"Yes she will. It'll give her a good excuse to wash her hands of me. Besides, I'm of age and can do as I like."

"Sinclair isn't a gentleman."

"I know. And a man of his class would be quite impossible elsewhere. But these Highlanders, with their mingled courtesy and independence, are Nature's gentlemen. Angus speaks correctly, and the Highland accent is rather pretty, I think. Then he's fairly well-to-do. His father owns several

cottages besides the one Aunt Mary has taken for the summer.

"This is a lovely spot, Dolly. I shouldn't mind living here, and one doesn't want riches in such a retired place. 'The world forgetting, by the world forgot.' Angus loves me, and he is the handsomest man I have ever seen; now, isn't he? Think of Miles Oakley beside him."

Dolly looked quickly at her cousin.

"Miles is a gentleman."

"And ugly and stupid. Angus is handsome, clever, and he adores me. I once thought Miles—but never mind that. I

shall marry Angus. It will be a romantic marriage, but I believe it will be a hundred times happier than the conventional one that May is sure to make."

"I don't believe you'll be happy," said Dolly.

"I'm sure I shall. It will be a case of 'all for love and the world well lost.' Aunt Mary and May will never speak to me again, but you won't desert me, Dolly, will you? You are such a staunch little soul."

"I won't, Meg. You can always count on me." Dolly's large brown eyes shone with unshed tears, for she was devoted to her cousin with that devotion a young girl often feels for an older woman. "But I'm so afraid you won't be happy, Meg. I'm afraid you're making a big mistake."

Meg smiled and kissed the soft cheek near her own.

"You darling, you needn't be afraid. But, dear Dolly, you won't say anything to Aunt Mary, will you? There's nothing arranged yet, and I don't want the storm to break before its time."

Dolly promised secrecy, and kept her promise faithfully until Meg's disappearance on the morning on which the party were to return to London rendered silence unnecessary.

"Miss Dorothy, a lady wishes to see you."

Dolly turned round.

"Did she ask for me particularly, Saunders? Didn't she give any name?"

"She asked particularly for Miss Dolly, and said she wouldn't send in her name, but her business was important."

Dolly glanced impatiently at the clock. She was expecting a very special visitor, and he was almost due now.

"It isn't a bit convenient, Saunders," she said, "but you may show her up. If—if Mr. Oakley comes while she is here put him into the library and let me know."

Five years had passed since Meg's romantic marriage, and Dorothy had grown into a very sweet and dainty little woman. She was not tall, nor was she, strictly speaking, pretty, though her deep brown eyes, fair curling hair, and brilliant colouring made her very attractive, but her chief charm was her expression of candour, innocence, and sincerity.

She had tried to keep up a correspondence with Meg, in spite of her mother's displeasure, but she had only had one letter from her cousin, and in that Meg said she did not wish to hear from any of her relatives. But Dolly had never forgotten her pretty cousin, and now as the door opened to admit a tall, graceful woman in mourning, Dolly uttered a scream and flew into her arms.

"Oh, Meg, my darling, how glad I am to see you."

"Is Aunt Mary at home?" asked Meg nervously, returning Dolly's embrace with interest.

"No. She won't be back for a long time yet. Sit down, darling—I'll ring for tea and we'll have a long talk."

"And May—where is she?"

"Oh, May's married. She married a very rich man just six months ago—the conventional marriage you always said she would make. But she seems most happy. And you, dear? Are you very happy?"

Meg had sunk down on a low chair by the fire, and was looking round the once familiar room.

"How pretty it all is!" she said, drawing a deep breath. "How lovely the flowers are! How delightful it is to see a pretty drawing-room after that odious little cottage. Ah Dolly, you were right, my marriage was a great mistake."

"Was it, dear? I'm so sorry."

There was a short silence while tea was brought in. Then Dolly brought her cousin over a cup of tea and some dainty little cakes.

"Thank you, dear. Oh, Dolly, I have suffered for my folly. Angus thought I had money. I told him my real position quite at first—that I was a poor relation and acted as your governess, but he thought it was all my romantic nonsense, for he could not believe a lady, as he knew me to be, could be penniless. When he found there was no money and realised that my relatives had cast me off, and he had a useless lady-wife on his hands, he was furious."

"I got your letter, my staunch little Dolly, but I had to tell you not to write again because Angus insisted that all my correspondence should pass through his hands."

"It was an awful life. I had to fetch water from the well, to cook, light fires, do all the work, and Angus' mother and sisters sneered at me for a useless fine lady who was just a burden and expense to the family. Then the food was so coarse. In winter we lived on salt herring and potatoes almost entirely. Then—the baby came."

Meg paused and tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, Dolly, she was such a comfort—a wee, wee thing, fair as a lily and beautiful as an angel. I called her Dolly after you. But she was delicate and wanted great care. I had no nurse for her, no servant at all. Angus was indignant when I wanted one, yet he was quite well enough off to keep at least one servant. He said what was good enough for his mother was good enough for me, and she had never wanted a servant."

"Was he unkind to you?" whispered Dolly.

"He didn't mean to be. It was just what you said, a big mistake. He had fancied himself in love with me as I had fancied myself in love with him, but he had hoped for money with me, and resented the disappointment."

"Then, too, we had nothing in common, and he was jealous of my superiority over his people. He didn't like my trying to keep to my own refined habits, and bring the baby up to be like myself."

"He was a good man in his own way, but small-minded and tyrannical. The child died in infancy, and just a year ago Angus was drowned while fishing. I took what little there was and came to London."

"Have you been a year in London without coming to me?" cried Dorothy.

"I wouldn't come till I was doing fairly well. I have a boarding-house in Bloomsbury, together with a friend who is also a widow, and we are getting on very well indeed. So I thought this afternoon I might come and see you."

"I'm so glad, and, Meg, I shall come and see you."

"Good, true little friend! Do you remember Miles Oakley and how you always stuck up for him?"

"Ah me! I have sometimes—wished—but never mind that now. Good-bye, darling, I must go, but I'll come again, for you're just the same as ever, just as sweet and loving, just as true. You were always true."

A hurried embrace and she was gone.

"Always true," repeated Dolly as the door closed behind her cousin. "Ah, Meg, if you only knew what it costs me to be true now!"

She sank down on a low chair before the fire, so lost in thought that she did not hear the door open after a time, and started violently as she felt a kiss on her cheek.

"Miles!" she cried, jumping up.

Miles Oakley was thirty-three, decidedly plain, and with no resemblance to a Greek god or a young Apollo, but a gentleman to his finger tips.

"Well, little sweetheart," he began, trying to take Dolly in his arms, but she gently repulsed him.

"Don't, Miles. I have something to tell you. Five years ago you used to come here very much, and mother thought you wanted May and so did May herself. But I knew better. You wanted Meg."

"Wise little woman, I did." They were both standing; Dolly looking pale and resolute, Miles gazing at her thoroughly puzzled.

"The night before May was married," Dolly went on, "she asked me to help her turn out her desk and burn old letters, looking them over first. I came upon one addressed to Miss M. Conyng ham, but beginning 'My darling Meg.' It was from you asking Meg to marry you. May told me it was brought to her by mistake, and out of spite she kept it."

"That's what became of that letter, then! I've often wondered."

"But don't you see what this means?" asked Dorothy. "Meg was piqued by your silence and rushed into this disastrous marriage. But she is now a widow, free, and lovelier than ever. I have just seen her, Miles, and I can give you her address. Go to her. Never mind me. Make her happy and be happy yourself."

"You noble girl, you true woman," said Miles, deeply moved. He took both her hands in his, and drew her towards him. "But you are utterly wrong, my darling. Listen! I did admire Meg very much, and I did write that letter. No answer came, but, not being a fellow in a novel, I wasn't going to take it for granted that silence meant a refusal."

"I saw Meg, found she hadn't had my letter, and repeated my proposal. She refused me. She was very candid; said she was a passionate lover of the beautiful and of the romantic, and that I was too commonplace and too ugly for her. I did think of trying again, but you went off to Scotland immediately, and then I heard of her romantic marriage. And then I fell in love with you, dear."

"But she is free now," faltered Dolly, "and more beautiful than ever."

"And if she were a thousand times more beautiful than ever, what is that to me?" cried Miles with sudden fire. "Free, is she? But I am not, and would not be for worlds. Dorothy, my own, my darling, believe me," drawing her to his breast, all unresisting, "believe me, sweet one, there are no birds in last year's nests, and all the love in my heart belongs to Dorothy and to Dorothy alone."

Vera Serkoff.



To Story Writers.

We shall be pleased to consider complete novelettes of about 20,000 words in length, and to pay cash down for those accepted. Manuscripts must be type-written (or very legibly hand-written), and should be sent to The Editor, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Postage for return of MSS., if unsuitable, should be inclosed.

IVA'S FIRST

DAY DREAM.

A Story of What

ALONG the steep, tree-clad bank of a winding west country stream a young man climbed one bright, blazing June afternoon.

Entirely bewildered as to his whereabouts, now he stopped to peer up the unexplored heights, now to look back upon the silvery thread below, always starting afresh, puzzled as ever as to his right route.

Soon, by good fortune, he stumbled on a guide.

Halting by a tangled underwood, where shadows and sunshine played hide-and-seek in the summer breeze, he saw beyond the moving branches what, from a distance, he had mistaken for a bit of grey crag, but what in truth was a decaying wall of some old monastic cell, and leaning lightly against it a young, girlish form, a book neglected at her feet, hands lazily clasped, and dark eyes dreamily gazing into the distance.

The south wind, stealing round an ivied corner, ruffled the dark feathers in her hat and stirred the short, curling chestnut hair below; but whatever whispers it bore upon its wings, it carried no tales of the stranger close at hand, no suspicion of an admiring watcher intruding upon that happy solitude.

"I beg your pardon, but may I ask if I'm on the right way to Mr. Hurst's, of Perristone?" A vivid blush rose on the young face that turned towards the inquirer with the answer:

"You are right if you wish to walk round by the bridge."

"But I think I was told to take a nearer way," said the newcomer, pushing forward through a miniature forest of bracken and oak saplings, and disclosing, under the broad-brimmed hat he raised, his sunburnt features. "I was to find Mr. Hurst's boat, ferry myself over if it was on this side, or shout for it if it was opposite. I have kept watch for the boat all along, but failed to find it. Can you kindly direct me to it?"

A glance, half-shy, half-amused, came with the response to this:

"I am afraid the boat is nowhere near. Some of them from the house are fishing from it, I believe."

"By Jove! And the bridge—"

"Will take you four miles round. The river winds so."

Now the day was delicious for doing nothing, and doing that at one's leisure; but the very idea of a four-mile trudge under a three-o'clock sun was exhausting.

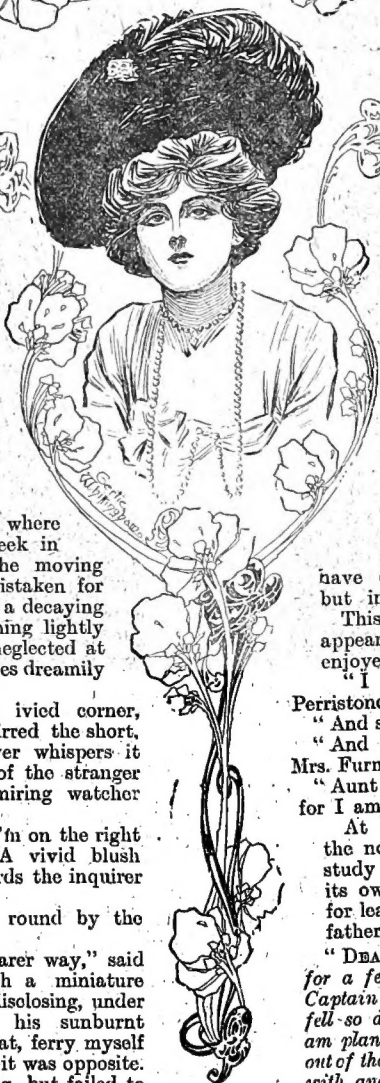
The young man hesitated, casting longing eyes at a mossy seat near by in a cool, shady angle.

His young guide had much ado to keep from laughing, and a pair of fascinating dimples began to hover about her cheeks.

"Is there no other way to get over?" said he, distinctly disinclined to go.

"None at all," said she, with a shake of the head.

"Then I have no choice. Thank you very much for directing me."



Might Have Been.

And, adding something to his farewell about being forced to get on to Perristone, the stranger turned to begin his long walk.

Hereat compunction overtook the young lady, and her detaining hand brought him to a standstill.

"Is it Mr. Hurst you are wanting to see?"

"Well, partly—yes."

"Then he is not at home. I saw him drive towards Ross half an hour back."

"Indeed! Thank you; but I must still go on. I shall find Mrs. Hurst within."

"Oh, no! Mrs. Hurst was to have come back from Gloucester yesterday, but instead she only returns this evening."

This seemed a stop final; but the gentleman appeared to be still undecided, or perhaps he enjoyed prolonging the conversation.

"I believe there are two Mr. Hursts, of Perristone. I am speaking of—of the squire."

"And so"—with a very pretty smile—"am I."

"And I bring a note to him from my hostess, Mrs. Furnival, of Coombside, who is his sister."

"Aunt Helen! Oh, then, give it to me, please, for I am his daughter."

At this off went the young man's hat again; the note was handed forth, and a prolonged study of the bright, young face enjoyed while its owner, taking the underlined "*Immediate*" for leave, opened and read this missive to her father:

"DEAR HUGH,—Please entertain the bearer of this for a few hours, and keep him to dinner. He is Captain Ryland, son of my old school fellow you fell so desperately in love with thirty years ago! I am planning a little surprise for him, and want him out of the way. Will explain when I come this evening with another friend. Love to Charlotte, who came for her absence."

back, of course, last night.—Your affectionate sister,

"HELEN FURNIVAL."

"Give Iva five-and-twenty kisses for me! The child hasn't been to see me for a week."

Iva finished the letter, and then, with a most charming mixture of girlish dignity and childish simplicity, turned to Captain Ryland, doing the hospitable honours of the moment for her absent parents.

"They will be so glad to see you this evening," said she; "and if you don't mind coming with me, we will soon find the boys—my brothers, I mean—and the boat, and I'll ferry you across. Papa will be sorry he was out."

And then a droll smile began to lurk again about her lips and Captain Ryland came to the conclusion that the squire's daughter was the most delightful substitute for her elders, and blessed the chance that sent his steps straying up this path.

Perhaps thrown off his guard by this unceremonious intro-

duction, he expressed his satisfaction a little too warmly, or Iva's ingenuousness took fright at compliments, but her shyness came back with a rush, and instead of loitering down the uneven way, she sprang on alone, never so much as looking to see if he were following, and gained the greensward by the river before her companion's less accustomed feet had half made the descent.

The moment he reached her—"Now," said she, with the young imperiousness that was vastly amusing, "stay here, if you please, and rest. I can run for Tom and Harold. I shall go much more quickly alone."

Captain Ryland begged for leave to join the search so humbly that it was graciously accorded, and therewith set in an innocent afternoon romance; for in the languid heat along the valley that search proved a most desultory affair.

"There's no particular need to hurry if Mr. Hurst won't be at home for a couple of hours," suggested the young man; and Iva agreeing, with the recollection that her brothers, coming up-stream, must pass this point, they stayed their ramble by a little hill rivulet that rippled down to its stronger sister, margined with whispering reeds and blue forget-me-nots, and on a huge lichen-tinted stone, among springing ferns and sprays of wild white rose, sat and waited most contentedly.

More than contentedly. For Wallis Ryland, at pains to undo his first blunder, put out the strength of his ten years' seniority to please; and Iva, with all the frankness of seventeen, was so ready to be propitiated that they were quickly on the best of terms, she gliding, willing as a child, into the present hour's enjoyment, he entangled every moment more, in the fresh charms of his young listener.

With the swallows circling overhead under the clear sky, no sound near save the rustling of many leaves and the rippling of gleaming waters, the most sensible of mortals would have found it hard to be prosaic.

Our couple had no extraordinary claims on sense, and soon they wandered far out of prosaic bounds.

To be sure, their words were commonplace enough—he telling of a chance encounter that brought about this visit to his mother's old friend; and Iva, with all the frankness of seventeen, was so ready to be propitiated that they were quickly on the best of terms, she gliding, willing as a child, into the present hour's enjoyment, he entangled every moment more, in the fresh charms of his young listener.

"Would she never care to leave that home—never?"

Then into a very wonderland followed Iva, while her companion told—and told well—of far-off countries where for eight years he had seen service, and had run the gauntlet of risks that had sent scores of men about him to their graves.

Desdemona like, she hung sighing upon stories such as she had never heard before, and saw in this fair-haired guest of her aunt's the nearest embodiment of a real hero she had ever known.

"But you were safe!" she cried, with a rising colour and a long, quivering breath at the climax of some danger where-out he had come scathless, thanks to his steed's swiftness. "And oh! I am so glad that—"

"That —?" echoed the young man, leaning a little nearer.

"That our Harold is not to be a soldier!" finished Iva, so stopping warmer words that a different answer would assuredly have betrayed Captain Ryland into uttering.

Thus quickly the minutes went by. The shadows lengthened, the golden light gathered about the tree tops; and not one thought did these young people give to time till a church bell, sounding over the hillside, startled Iva.

"Six o'clock!" she exclaimed, opening wide her eyes, as if just waking, "and the boys not back! Perhaps they went the other way, after all, and have left the boat for me. Oh, if I have kept you here for nothing, I am so sorry!"

"But I am not—I never shall be!" was the reply, in a low tone, that stirred a curious answering thrill. "And must we

hurry now? Here, stay!" as a long branch of roses caught her dress. "Let me just gather some of these before we go."

A bunch of roses, a half-hour's homeward stroll side by side in silence which was more eloquent than speech; three minutes' row across the narrow stream—they would have made it hours if they could—and the brief drama drew to its final act.

The boat was moored under the willow. As the occupants stepped out one forgot to let loose the hand that lay in his.

For a few seconds they lingered so, she gazing over the peaceful meadows to the dim Welsh hills, that 'all to-night seemed dressed in some new beauty, he looking down on her—beauty enough for him.

Suddenly "Iva!" shouted a boyish voice, and Harold came racing down the steep lane, with a flood of questionings and explainings anent fishing and wading that lasted the whole way up to the manor.

There the home party, earlier returned, awaited them, Aunt Helen in their midst, and someone strange, whom she brought forward with many smiles, and, "Now you'll forgive me for going off to Swanley Junction alone, Captain Ryland! I wanted to make sure of her coming before I told you a word about it."

The next minute a fair young woman, with the calm air of proprietorship begotten of long engagement, was holding the gentleman's arm; and how happy he might be looking Iva never saw, for with a little cry, she had run to her mother, glad—ah, strange to say, glad almost to tears—to shelter once again by her safe side.

But that was years ago. Iva is now a gracious young wife, loving and dearly loved, the garden of her life filled with such blossoms as womanhood prizes above all others.

But now and again across her thoughts, like first notes of a melody never completed, flits a memory of warm June hours, of the first throb of an unknown pleasure, of a nameless pain—of a glimpse into a possibility never fulfilled—of the farewell she bade her childhood in a midsummer day's dream.

Mabel Villiers.

"THE PAPER THAT A BOY CAN TAKE HOME."

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The Cruise of the Clan Macquarrie.

A Tale of Scottish Fidelity.

CHARLIE, my young brother, had been fagging at his studies; I had just passed my final, and was proportionately elate. We had earned our summer holiday, we thought; and nothing loath was I when Charlie, with a map in his hand, pointed out a spot on the Caithness coast and exclaimed:

"Here we are! There we'll go! What say you, Frank?"

"Very good choice. Plenty of ozone, fishing and boating; fashion at a discount. Where is the time-table?"

A primitive fishing-village—call it Clanhead—was quickly fixed upon; and after the usual delights of railway travelling we found ourselves in a place richly endowed by nature, but without an inn.

A Highland cottage, however, proved a comfortable enough shelter; and after a night's rest and a hearty fish breakfast we strolled off towards the sea.

In the one straggling street of Clanhead were yellow-haired children, who stood in wide-eyed, innocent wonder, and stared at us. Perhaps they were overcome by the sight of our hideous brown sand-shoes; or it might have been that they were bewitched by Charlie's handsome face.

Charlie is the Adonis of our family; and I—well, I am an ugly young man, with a marvellously wide mouth, eyesight so near that I cannot pick up a sixpence without the help of my glasses, and an expression, to say the least of it, scared.

Such as we were, we stood the lads' and lasses' scrutiny unabashed, plodding on till we perceived a middle-aged man leaning on a gate in, I imagined, an attitude of repose.

He turned, however, and moved towards us.

"Will ye no' be takin' a sail the mornin', gentlemen?"

"Just what we want!" cried Charlie.

"Aweel, tak' ye the first turn to the reet an' it'll bring ye to the head o' the cliff. Some way back ye'll see the openin' to a ravine. Gang awa' through the gap an' ye'll soon be where the sea washes the cliff-foot. Be ye canny, for the tide's high the noo, an' the shallowest water there may drown ye. In five minutes I'll be comin' roond wi' my boat an' my mate at your service."

The boatman touched his cap and moved off; we made for the ravine, passed down it, and came suddenly upon the most magnificent expanse of rolling water that our eyes had ever feasted upon.

Shortly from, I suppose, some sheltering nook under the cliff, came along our little craft, the *Clan Macquarrie*, with her mainsail spread and her master at the helm, while Donald, his mate, kept watch at the bow.

With a "Yo ho! Steady! Yo ho!" she was "brought to" and in we scrambled, neck or nothing.

We were scarcely seated before, emerging from the ravine, toiling on with the help of a crutch over loose earth and boulders, came a girl, with a sweet but very sad face; evidently she was suffering in mind and body.

"Ech, Hanny, Hanny!" said our boatman, with a softened

intonation, "ye should na act sae, my dear. When gentlemen hire the *Clan Macquarrie* they dinna expect to tak' her master's family aboard! Gang awa' hame again, Mamie."

"Oh, by all means take your girl aboard, Mr. —"

"Ben is my name, sir, and I thank ye for your kindness. Come, then, bairn; and, look ye, dinna trust to your crutch when ye step aboard. Should the boat luff, it may slip frae under ye. Let melay it doon at the stern, and gie me your hand. Now, steady, and in ye are!"

Ben guided the boat off, then turned to the girl again.

"Eh, my bairnie, not sae mickle as a speck o' headgear, and they bits o' fallal clothing flying about ye! Ye'll catch your death! Ye maun hae my jacket on. Mebbe, sir, ye'll be sae kind as to haud the tiller whiles I dress her oop? There, now, Mamie, are ye no' warmly buskit?"

Off we were before the wind, our swelling mainsail hiding the man at the bow.

The grand sea and sky threw Charlie and myself into ecstasies. Ben, used to such scenes, was quiet and, I thought, sad, while the lassie looked decidedly sleepy.

"Eh, my doo," said Ben, "ye were oop wi' the birds; I marked ye windin' your way to the cliffs by the first glint o' the sun. Ye's liken to a wraith, my dearie. Ye's aye wandering. Aweel, lay doon your head a while on my shoulder, and be ye takin' a wee bit sleep the noo."

With his disengaged arm Ben supported the frail little body, and soon his charge was dozing as restfully as any weary child.

As she slept I espied a wedding-ring on her finger; and even in repose her face told a tale of mental and bodily suffering. Some heavy calamity, I thought, must have fallen upon her.

Her childlike confidence in Ben, and his tenderness towards her, were pathetic; and, altogether, my sympathy was won.

Presently I ventured to ask if she were not an invalid; and Ben returned:

"Oo, yes, sir; and she is my only bairn. Pretty doo. She married ower early, and a week after Tam, her husband, sailed north wi' his crew for the fishin'. Three months hae passed sin' the wofu' day, but nae word can we get o' boat or men."

"Then you think the vessel——"

"Went doon, sir, is what ye mean. There is nae doot about it; for, miles awa' along coast, a piece of her sail was washed ashore. But my lamb knows na *that*; an' sae, instead o' puttin' on widow's weeds, she aye says we'se boun' to find him; an' she watches the sea, an' questions every fisherman she meets, till it's just pitifu' to hear her."

"She is nearly distraught," thought I. Then I gave Ben a warning note regarding the imperative need of trying to divert her mind from her trouble. Also I proffered a word of advice about her lameness, which, it appeared, arose from some recent injury done to the muscles; and which, I gathered, had been treated in anything but a scientific manner.

Ben was delighted to find that I was a doctor, and most grateful for my interest in him. Indeed, he was so earnest in pouring out his thanks when I volunteered to take Mamie's case in hand while I was at Clanhead, that the man at the bow (as he afterwards owned) became an absorbed and sympathetic listener; for Mamie and he had been playmates, and he felt rather down-hearted, Ben told me, when Tam carried her off.

Deep in our subject, and entirely free from apprehension, we scudded pleasantly along. One moment our thoughts were of healing; the next—crash! crash!!! crash!!! over our heads, under our feet, everywhere!

A swift glance at the mainsail, wrench at the tiller, and a tremendous shout from Ben:

"Bow, there, bow! are ye sleepin', mon?"

The warning was too late. A large vessel was down upon us; our mainsail was pierced by her bowsprit; our timbers were shivering under her bows. I heard shouting on the deck above us; I saw a man leap from the vessel's side; I saw Mamie wake up in an agony of terror, and throw her arms round her father's neck; I heard Ben say, "Nae, dina cumber me, but strike ye dot an' trust."

I knew we were all in the water, for I saw Ben supporting his child as he swam vigorously towards the man who had leapt over. I saw Charlie going down (neither he nor I was a swimmer), I clutched at him fruitlessly; then came the confused cries of "Keep your heads up!" "Here's a life-belt!" "Catch this rope!" and so on.

But soon the voices sounded far away and undistinguishable, I knew that salt water was in my nostrils and mouth; there was singing in my ears, roaring in my head; I felt a mad impulse to rise; I did rise; again, for a moment only, I heard eager voices near me, and caught a glimpse of the efforts that were being made to save us; in an agony I made an effort to keep up; it was futile; then, hiss! hiss! swish! through my very brain; after that, darkness, dense darkness! a clear consciousness that the hand of Death was on me; a cry from my inmost soul to Heaven, and—a strange deep calm.

The sun was going down in a flood of crimson glory. I lay upon a well-swabbed deck all alone. Where had I been? Where was I going? What had happened? I pinched myself and felt the pain; so I was still in the flesh. I tried my voice—"Hi! halloo! somebody!"

No one came. I sat up and took a speculative survey. The vessel was taut and trim, and she smelt of timber, but she was not of British build.

As I cogitated—rather weakly, I must own—a footstep sounded on the deck, and along came a good-natured looking seaman, fair and blue-eyed; he made his way to me and gazed smilingly down.

"What ship is this?" queried I.

A shake of the head.

"Are you a German?"

Two shakes of the head.

"Speak, man, in some tongue or other, will you?"

The word "speak" he understood, and obeyed with energy. But no word of any language could I pick out from his strange jargon.

Feeling, no doubt, that my understanding wanted arousing, he went away and shortly returned with six other men; some strong, fair and blue-eyed like himself, the rest shorter, darker, but powerfully built, and all chattering the most unintelligible jargon.

As they bent their energies to make me acquainted with something or other, I tried hard to discover their nationalities, for certainly they were not all of one nation, when—happy thought!—came flitting through my brain the words:

*"And then the blue-eyed Norseman told
A saga of the days of old."*

"You are from Norway!" bawled I. "And you," the darker men, "you are Swedes. Am I right?"

"Ha! Norrøway! Norge! Norge! Ha! Ha! Norrike! Ha! Ha!"

The words were taken up like a refrain with boisterous satisfaction. Had I only raised my eyes to the vessel's flag, I might have seen at first that she was called the *Jarl Hakon*. But just then my wits were scattered. They began, however, to disentangle themselves, and thoughts of Charlie, Ben, and the rest, crowded upon me. Where were they? Where was the lame girl? and where the *Clan Macquarrie*?

It was useless to question, so I rose up and with rather unsteady gait walked across the deck and found my way to the captain's cabin.

On one side lay Ben, with pain in every line of his face; in the captain's berth, looking absolutely dead, was Mamie;

stretched out on a rug lay my brother. He, however, managed to moan out "Hooray!" when he saw me.

I went to the girl's side and felt her pulse. Then, "Where's the captain?" said I to Ben's careless mate, Donald, who was standing by, the picture of helpless distress.

"Here," came a ready answer from a mellow voice behind me.

I turned. There stood a portly, grey-headed man, with a trustworthy face. He spoke English; this was worth something just then.

"Have you a wife—a lady on board, sir, who will carry out my instructions respecting this patient?"

"Are you, then, a physician?"

"I am a member of the College of Surgeons, and am anxious to do my best in this emergency."

"I am heartily glad, sir. A lady—no; there is not one on board. But there is a man who would lay down his life for this child. He is burly, but docile; let him be her nurse."

"Oh, her father? But he is in a sorry plight himself. I fear I shall find some broken bones when I have time to look at him."

"No, not her father—her husband."

I glanced at Ben.

"I know," said he; "there's a reet bright siller linin' to oor cloud, thank Heaven."

"Bring him in," quoth I.

He came; a young fellow having a splendid physique and six feet two of height, the very man who had leapt from the side of the *Jarl Hakon* to our rescue.

I stretched out my arm in front of the berth as a warning or barrier. But Tam had tact and caution. He stood mutely looking down on his ghostly young wife; then, in response to a touch on his arm, he bent his head to take my orders.

While Mamie remained unconscious he was to keep his post quietly, using the prescribed remedies; the moment she showed signs of consciousness he was to vanish.

I turned to Ben, who I found had a broken arm.

"Splints!" said I to Charlie, who was on his feet by this time. "Go to the captain for thin wood, and tools to shape it, also linen for bandages—a sheet will do. Now, Ben, you are a Briton, I know; you trust me to set that bone?"

"Trust ye? Ay, sir; I ne'er wince at sich like! I'd be poorly off if it were na set."

That business was got through; and Ben had scarcely uttered a moan from first to last, but cold perspiration stood on his forehead, and I was just dispatching Donald for a strong cup of tea to revive him when—a sudden knock on my arm.

I turned sharply. "Beg pardon, sir," whispered Tam, as his great bulk rolled and stumbled into a dark corner beyond me.

But Mamie's eyes were wide open; the whiteness had gone from her face; her breath came thick and fast; she even tried to raise herself on her elbow.

"Father! father! Ye've foun' my Tam!"

Quaking with fear lest the remedy should be worse than the disease, I motioned Tam out from his hiding-place.

I saw the girl's face flush violently; I saw her throw up her arms to clasp her husband's neck; I saw the young giant turn white and weak with emotion; then away darted I, never halting till I reached the stern. Tyro as I was, I would rather have set half a dozen more bones than have stood out that meeting.

The captain was there, and very soon we got into conversation. Here is the substance of what he told me.

The *Jarl Hakon* was doing a pine trade between Bergen and Aberdeen. On her last homeward voyage she had picked up Tam and another seaman who were beating hopelessly about in a small boat, half-dead with thirst and exhaustion.

Tam was now working his way back to Scotland.

Mamie walked without her crutch before I left Clanhead, and Ben's bone was doing well. My holiday had been a most successful one.

Stanley Hammond.



THE "BRIDGE" OF RUIN.

Being the
CONFESSIONS OF A GIRL GAMBLER.

Dramatis Personæ.

OLIVE BERESFORD, the writer of these confessions. She is a young lady who is lured into gambling by her friend, Annabel Vernon, whom she detects cheating. Miss Beresford arranges a secret

code of signals with a Mr. Taskot, in order to beat Annabel Vernon at her own game.

HARRY VERNON, of Vernon Towers, who with his wife plans to catch Olive in a trap. He manages to secure photographs of the incriminating gestures passed between Mr. Taskot and the relater of these episodes.

ANNABEL VERNON, wife of the last-named. An old school friend of Miss Beresford. Her husband having obtained the proofs of Olive's alleged cheating, she holds the photos over her victim as a threat, declaring that, unless Miss Beresford does as she is ordered, she will be denounced as a card-sharper. She makes the unfortunate girl a tool to win money from her guests.

MR. TASKOT, who poses as a gentleman of means, but who is really a despicable bounder. He endeavours to force Miss Beresford to marry him.

MR. MAURICE RAY, a gentleman who rescues the narrator from a mad dog, and who since takes a kindly interest in the welfare of the young girl, treating her with great respect, and showing her much consideration.

MR. DEAN FISHER, a "Bridge" expert, and one of the guests of the Vernons at Vernon Towers when Olive Beresford was fleeced.

MRS. GRAINGER, a rich widow and an ardent gambler, another of the guests at the Towers.

MR. HAROLD BAINBRIG, a wealthy bachelor, who with his sister,

MISS EDITH BAINBRIG, loses heavily at "Bridge" whilst playing with the Vernons and the unwilling Olive Beresford.

EPISODE SIXTEEN.

Phantom Stakes.

I BELIEVE there had been some idea of including the Vernons in the little house-party to be entertained by Mrs. Grainger, who appeared to spend nearly all her time in visiting or being visited.

If her friends lived some distance off, she made her stay a prolonged one, and even if they only lived a few miles from her residence, she preferred to stay the night, if possible, so that she might not have to forego one tittle of whatever enjoyment was to the fore.

She had been some days at Vernon Towers before my arrival, but, in consequence of what had happened, she did not consider herself bound to return the hospitality she had received, and neither Harry nor Annabel Vernon was ever likely to overcome the disgust which their behaviour to me had inspired in her.

Neither would she countenance Mr. Dean Fisher any more, and it was thus doubly vexing for me to have an otherwise promisingly pleasant little evening spoiled by the advent of Mr. Taskot, whose presence was a continual reminder of misfortune.

He evidently regarded the matter from quite another point of view, for his face positively beamed at sight of me, though I would fain have avoided the warm handshake with which he emphasised his satisfaction.

"H'm! This is going to be quite jolly, don't you know," he said, casting at me a languishing glance, which sent the hot colour rushing over my cheeks. "I never dreamt that I should have the pleasure of meeting you here."

"You knew that I was coming home to-day," interposed Mrs. Grainger, who did not look over pleased at Mr. Taskot's pointed attention to me. "That in itself ought to have made you feel sure of plenty of amusement."

"My dear lady," was the quick protest, given with a most graceful bow to our hostess, "there can be no two opinions about that. But I had an impression that our mutual friends, the Vernons, were rather antagonistically inclined towards Miss Beresford, and I was glad to see that she had been received and brought into safer quarters."

"Indeed! What made you think things would not do well with her at the Towers?"

"Well, Vernon, and afterwards Fisher, had the cheek to say Miss Beresford knew a fine sight more about cards than she pretended to know, and that her veridancy at bridge was all a sham. Of course I fired up at once. In fact, we had words about it, and I declined to stay longer in a house where the host and hostess broke all the rules of hospitality by maligning their guests."

If Mr. Taskot imagined that I would accept the situation as he put it, and acknowledge that his hasty departure from Vernon Towers was due to his chivalrous defence of me, he was mistaken. I knew exactly why he went, but of course I dared not challenge the truth of his statement.

Mr. Ray knew everything that had transpired. But Mr. Taskot was the only other person, except the Vernons and Mr. Fisher, who knew about the compromising snapshots, and I dared not risk enlightening anybody else.

So Mr. Taskot's impertinence was allowed to pass muster for the time being, and Mrs. Grainger, thoroughly good-humoured again, entered into a quick narration of the events which preceded the general exodus from Vernon Towers.

"Monstrous!" exclaimed Mr. Taskot, having listened most intently. "As if it were likely that Miss Beresford would condescend to enter Harry Vernon's den in the middle of the night!"

"Why will you talk about all this unpleasantness?" was my impatient question. "It has been dreadful enough without dwelling upon it now."

Mr. Grainger did not look very pleased at this check to her volubility, especially as it emanated from the very person whose cause she was championing. But Mr. Bainbrig quietly indorsed my protest, and suggested that as soon as Mr. Taskot was ready, we would begin our game.

The latter immediately sat down, opposite to me, with the evident intention of constituting himself my partner. But this was an arrangement I wanted to avoid, and I suggested that we should cut for partners, which was accordingly

done. Unfortunately, the cuts were against my inclination, and I had no choice but to play with Mr. Taskot.

I was nervous and ill-at-ease, so probably played very badly. Anyhow, we lost two rubbers, and, becoming frightened of the consequences, I protested that I would play no more.

"I have lost more already than I shall ever be able to pay," I said, "so please do not ask me to continue playing now."

"Look here, Miss Beresford," smiled Mr. Bainbrig. "I'm really enjoying myself immensely. But not because I am winning money, for I do not intend to take any of my winnings. There is plenty of fun in the game, without juggling one's income away over it."

Greatly to my relief, both Mr. Grainger and Mr. Taskot agreed to play for phantom stakes, and there was now no more earnest player than myself. We continued one rubber after another until we were all fain to own ourselves tired, and I was actually going to bed before it struck me that we had devoted ourselves with such abandon to the game that we had given ourselves time to talk of nothing else.

My luck had fluctuated considerably, and after we had decided upon phantom stakes only, I was a rapid winner, until, when we came to add up the results, it transpired that I was over three hundred pounds to the good.

"Over three hundred pounds!" I murmured to myself. "Why, it is a small fortune! How foolish I was to protest so soon. I should not have needed to hesitate at taking the money, for both the losers have heaps of it."

To tell the truth, I was by this time so smitten with the gambling mania, that I was prepared to risk anything, and I resolved that if the others were tired of phantom stakes, I would not insist upon them myself.

EPISODE SEVENTEEN. A Dangerous Champion.

Mrs. GRAINGER's establishment was kept on a liberal scale of expenditure, and the garden was a dream of loveliness. When I rose on the first morning after my arrival, both blackbirds and thrushes were holding high revel, and I eagerly made my way to a rustic arbour wherein I could enjoy sweet scents and sounds without incurring undue fatigue.

Late hours seemed to be inseparable from the enjoyment of the game by which I was now thoroughly fascinated. But late hours were rather new to me, and, coupled with the anxiety of mind I had suffered, they were making great inroads upon the freshness of my looks. They were also making inroads upon the freshness of my nature, for even out here the glamour of gambling had me in its grip, and it seemed quite a natural, although unwelcome sequel to my thoughts when Mr. Taskot's voice broke upon them.

"I thought I should find you here," he said, sitting down on the rustic seat beside me with much more familiarity in his manner than I approved of. "It's queer what a knack you and I have of running against each other in the open. It's a kind of telepathy, you know."

"There's no telepathy on my part, I assure you," was my sharp rejoinder. "And you are hardly justified in disturbing me whenever I try to be alone."

"Do you mind if I have a smoke?"

The question was asked with as much confidence as if Mr. Taskot had joined me at my express desire, and I was nettled into being very stiff indeed with the man who was so impervious to snubs as he was.

"If you smoke here," I said, "I shall go to another part of the garden."

"Thank you, Miss Beresford, for having the courage to speak your mind. I will debar myself from smoking at

present, because it is imperative for us two to have a long talk together."

"I do not see the necessity of that."

"You will presently, when that little secret of ours has been turned over, and limited to its proper diet."

"Its proper diet is silence."

"Yes, after I know what sort of a hotch-potch was made of yesterday's ingredients. You observed my sudden departure, after an interview with Mr. Dean Fisher?"

"Yes."

"Well, thereby hangs a tale. I was told that an ingenious little system of espionage had been adopted, and I was mulcted of several hundred pounds under a threat of having certain compromising snap-shots exhibited as proofs of cheating by me—and by you."

"You paid several hundred pounds?"

"Yes, and received in exchange a complete set of films, depicting every trick you and I resorted to while playing our little game of diamond cut diamond. Would you like to see them?"

I nearly fainted at this unexpected revelation, for I never imagined such a calamity as that which was hero indicated.

When I burnt the photographs which I abstracted from Harry Vernon's den, I thought I had finished that painful episode of my life for ever. Yet here it had cropped up again, and, looking at Mr. Taskot's face, with its affectedly poised monocle, and its curious mixture of cunning and vivacity, I felt sure that he meant to be as merciless towards me in his way as the Vernons had been in theirs.

"Would you like to see them?" he repeated.

"What good can it do me to see them?" I moaned. "I have suffered enough already from the sight of them!"

"Oh! Then there is a duplicate set! That box of a Vernon deceived me and got my money on the pretence of yielding all the proofs up to me! By Jove but I'll be even with him for this. But I say what has become of the other set or sets? Do you know?"

It was on the point of my tongue to say that I had burnt them. But it suddenly struck me that if Mr. Taskot was going to hold his set over me, threateningly, I might just as well appear to be in an equally strong position.

"You heard the story of the trumped-up charge of theft which was brought against me, and afterwards retracted?" I asked.

"Yes. Had that anything to do with the photographs?"

"Everything. I really did go to Harry Vernon's den, in the middle of the night. I knew where the things were kept, and I abstracted them—"

"So, Miss Beresford, you are, on your own admission, a thief after all!"

Shall I ever forget the distress inspired by these dreadful words, which were hissed at me by Mrs. Grainger. Unnoticed by either of us, she had crept silently up to the arbour, probably with no worse idea in her mind than to surprise what she suspected to be a lover's *tête-à-tête*. Seeing us in close converse, she had stopped to listen a moment before showing herself, and an evil Fate would have it that the one sentence she heard was that in which I apparently showed the justice of the accusations brought against me by the Vernons!

"No! No!" I gasped. "You are making a horrible mistake! I—"

"I made a horrible mistake yesterday in believing your protestations of innocence, and in ignoring the warnings of my friends. I shall go back to the Towers and apologise to both Mr. and Mrs. Vernon—as soon as you have relieved my house of your wicked presence."

"Look here, Mrs. Grainger," protested Mr. Taskot, "you





MR. TASKOT

are jumping at preposterous conclusions. It was quite an innocent little matter that we were talking about."

"Exactly! It must be a very innocent matter that makes a young lady visit somebody else's room, in the middle of the night, and abstract things that do not belong to her!"

"But she had more right to them than the Vernons. It was they who had stolen a march on Miss Beresford first—and on me. And she was only——"

"Pardon me," was the angry interruption, "if I refuse to listen to such nonsense. I suppose Miss Beresford has fascinated you

to a remarkably foolish extent, or you would never countenance her bareface iniquities."

"Countenance them? I identify myself with them."

"Then your case is indeed hopeless, and I advise you to devote yourself in future to championing the cause of a person whose behaviour will have to alter if she is to continue escaping with no further punishment than expulsion from the houses she disgraces with her presence."

There was not much breeding about Mrs. Grainger, or she could not have expressed her opinions with such brutal frankness before the humiliated girl whom this terrible blow had almost stricken dumb and motionless. Mr. Taskot had his own reasons for wanting to keep me in his power; but I will certainly give him credit for resenting the treatment to which I was being subjected by my present hostess.

"Thank you for the suggestion, Mrs. Grainger," he said, looking almost dignified as he drew himself up to his full height. "I shall be only too happy to be of service to Miss Beresford at any time, and I repeat that, in spite of the manner in which you have misconstrued the remark she made to me, there is no reason why you should not give her your entire respect."

"And I decline to accept your standard of morality, Mr. Taskot."

"After that," was the grim retort, "there is no alternative for either of us but to clear out of this at once. Only, Mrs. Grainger, let me tell you one thing—you will very likely be made to pay for your folly, if you believe a word the Vernons say against anybody, and if——"

But Mrs. Grainger, with scant ceremony, cut short anything more Mr. Taskot intended to say, by turning her back upon us both, and marching into the house, leaving me choked with grief at the strange fate which pursued me so relentlessly.

For some little time I was absolutely incapable of judging what was best to be done, and my fatal inability to argue sufficiently in my own favour at the critical moment left me without hope of being able to remove Mrs. Grainger's ill opinion of me.

"I say," said Mr. Taskot, after he had given me what he believed to be leisure enough to recover my self-possession, "it's no good your trying to stop here any longer, you know."

"I should be very sorry to stop a minute longer than I can help now," I returned indignantly. "I am not sorry to leave anyone who could so readily believe ill of me."

"No, but the mischief of it is, Mrs. Grainger will tell everybody her version of the story, and you will have no means of disproving it, unless you don't mind my explaining all about those little snapshots."

Of course I could not think of such a thing, even if Mr. Taskot really meant what he said, which I doubt, and I was nearly distracted at the disgrace which had overtaken me. But I no longer felt helpless, and I soon explained my immediate

intentions to the man who seemed to be so strangely mixed up with all my misfortunes.

I felt just the same here as I did the day before at Vernon Towers—I could not eat another bite under the roof of a person who believed me to be a criminal, and I hastened to pack my belongings, ready to depart as soon as Mr. Taskot could procure a vehicle to take me to the nearest station.

But I was warned by yesterday's events, and insisted upon Mrs. Grainger either examining my luggage or owning that she could not accuse me of my attempt to add any of her property to my own.

The position was dreadful, though necessary in my own future interests, and when at last I drove away, escorted by Mr. Taskot, who was also leaving the neighbourhood, it seemed as if my cup of humiliation could hold not another drop.

For the first mile of our drive we were both silent. Then Mr. Taskot startled me out of despairing apathy by remarking: "I'm awfully sorry things have turned out so awkwardly, Miss Beresford. But it seems as if Destiny intended you and me to run in harness together."

"In harness together? Whatever do you mean?" was my astonished rejoinder.

"Oh, it's not difficult to guess what I mean. I think you and I are cut out for one another. So don't you think we'd better marry?"

"No, no! I couldn't dream of such a thing!"

"Excuse me, Miss Beresford, but you will find it to your interest to marry me. With my co-operation, you can recover your hold on Society. Without it——"

"My hold on Society is too slight for me to want to recover it. I shall go back home, and live as I have previously done, among people who will never come into contact with those who have made my life a misery these last few days."

"On the contrary, you will become my wife! Otherwise there will be so many awkward disclosures that you will be irretrievably disgraced everywhere. I shall haunt the neighbourhood you live in, until you consent to marry me. And if you think of proving obdurate, nothing that has taken place at Vernon Towers or at Mrs. Grainger's house will remain secret. Perhaps you would not like your old friends and acquaintances to know the estimation in which you are held here. But marrying me is your only alternative."

"Oh, you coward! I gasped. "You dare to threaten a defenceless girl!"

"My threat, as you call it, involves nothing worse than marrying a man whom lots of other girls would jump at. And don't you forget that I have more evidence against you than either the Vernons or Mrs. Grainger."

Hitherto, I had been shocked and frightened. Now I was so angry that my fear left me, and I felt only contempt for the creature who could be cruel enough to try and terrorise me into subjection just when I most needed consideration.

"Mr. Taskot," I said scathingly. "If there were not another man on earth, and if, as you say, there were no alternative between marrying you and being disgraced for life, I would still refuse you. Now, sir, you may do your worst. You cannot humiliate me more than I have been humiliated already, and if people in England refuse to believe in my innocence of real fraud, I will change my name and go to live in another country. Now you have my answer."



MRS. GRAINGER

"You shall rue this!" were the next words that were levelled at me. "I have been told something about the quixotic individual who made the Vernons and Fisher eat their words yesterday. Perhaps that individual is in love with you. And perhaps you return his passion. Hence your refusal of me. Very well, this Mr. Maurice Ray shall be disillusioned, and we'll see what he thinks of the snapshots which prove guilty collusion between you and me. I know him by reputation, and I know that he cannot afford to marry a woman whose character will bar him from mixing with the people upon whom his livelihood depends, so you may put him out of your calculations."

This last shot told. How could I hope to retain the respect of any honourable man, if such frightful odds were to be raised against me? No wonder my face paled! And no wonder Mr. Taskot, thinking he had scored a point, began to look triumphant again.

"Look here, darling!" he exclaimed, hardly troubling to lower his voice so that the driver of the open fly could not hear us. "I have sworn to win you, and no man would ever make you a more devoted husband than I would."

"I shall never marry you!" was my steady answer. "And nothing you can ever say will make me alter my mind."

An evil gleam shot into Mr. Taskot's face, and his monocle hung unheeded on its cord, leaving the full m'levidence of both eyes staring into mine.

"I can say nothing to improve my case," he hissed. "Then I will do something that shall."

And, before I could guess what the man intended to do, he had gathered me in his arms, and was showering kisses upon my face, which his superior strength kept upturned to his, in spite of my frantic struggles to free myself.

"There!" he muttered, when at last I had wrenched myself out of his grasp. "Tell me now if you think the other man will ever look at you again?"

I was already almost choked with anger. But despair was added to my distress when I noticed that the vehicle was at a standstill, and that Maurice Ray, his face full of contempt, had been an astounded spectator of the scene which must have stamped me as a person whose conduct was beneath respect.

(Another long Instalment next week.)

TOMMY: "Papa, is the lieutenant a tailor?" Father: "No, my boy. Whatever made you think so?" Tommy: "I saw him yesterday measuring Fanny's waist."

MABEL: "Why do you always buy two kinds of note paper?" Maud: "Well, you see, when I write to Tom I used red paper—that means love; and when I write to Jack I use blue paper—which means faithful and true."

PRETTY CASHIER: "You might give me a holiday to recruit my health. My beauty is beginning to fade." Manager: "Why do you think so?" Pretty cashier: "The men are beginning to count their change."

ALGERNON: "But are you sure, Madeline, that there are not times when you regret our engagement?" Madeline: "Haven't I had proposals from many men—handsome, honourable, cultivated, delightful men—and yet" (tenderly) "didn't I choose you, dear?"

LITTLE WILLIE: "Are you going to marry my sister Maude, Mr. De Jones?" Mr. De Jones (Maude's admirer): "Why, Willie, that's a funny question to ask me. What do you want to know for?" Little Willie: "'Cause I heard her tell mamma she would give five shillings to know, and I want the money, do you see?"

"I HAVE it on good authority that you let young Smithkins kiss you last evening," said a young man to his fiancée, and he frowned darkly as he spoke. The maiden did not deny the accusation. She pouted as she replied: "You don't love me! So there!" "Not love you!" replied the young man, "why, I adore you, and you know it." "No, you don't! True love is unselfish, and you seem to be selfish enough to want all my kisses for yourself."



ALL loyal Britishers, and most especially the sons and daughters of the bonnie land north of the Tweed, look forward, I know, with great delight to the appearance of the Tartan Cover numbers of this paper. This week depicts the gay apparel of the Clan Macquarrie, and I honestly believe that a prettier design is practically unattainable. The mingling of the various shades of colour is exquisite, and the whole tone superb. For the benefit of those who would like to make—as many are doing—a complete set of our Tartan numbers, I will state here when the previous ten appeared. The Menzies, the first of the series, came out on August 2nd, the Macpherson on August 16th, the Macleod on September 13th, the Rob Roy on October 4th, the Macmillan on October 25th, the Macdonald of Sleat, on November 29th, all of last year; and the Erskine, the Clergy, the Bruce, and the Macfie on January 3rd, February 7th, April 25th, and July 4th of this year respectively. All can still be obtained.

I HAVE a very pleasant surprise in store for you. At present it's a secret, and though I know you love to be confided in, I am afraid you will have to wait till next week before I divulge everything. Then I will tell you more about a most entertaining series of stories relating the exciting experiences of a young girl, that will soon be commencing, written by the heroine herself. I can only say that, knowing your excellent taste as I do, you will enjoy this new feature immensely, and I think it will be one of the greatest successes we have had for a long time.

BUSINESS took me the other day into the East End of London, amongst the sordid surroundings of slum life. Presently I came across a youngster, looking delightfully brown and happy, and I could not help noticing what a contrast he made to his companions. Curiosity compelled me to speak to the lad and ask him why he looked so healthy. He answered, and his face lit up with a glad remembrance, "I went into the country all day yesterday, sir; down near Epping Forest, with the FRESH AIR FUND." Thousands and thousands of London's waifs and strays, who seldom in the great turmoil of the metropolis catch a glimpse of the sun, have been cheered for one day in their miserable existence by the help of those charitable people who subscribe to PEARSON'S FRESH AIR FUND. To them it is a red-letter day. Won't you help a fellow-creature? Ninepence is all that is required to procure a whole day's freedom for one hapless child. The fine weather is almost gone; you have had and enjoyed your holidays. Lest you forget, send at once a small donation to the Hon. Sec., F.A.F., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

AN important announcement regarding the "Buried Station" competition will be found on page 375.

Your Editor.



"Old Ratch."

The Story of a Man's Misfortune and a Woman's Love.

CAPTAIN GERALD BRAIDTHWAITH, late of His Majesty's Seventieth Lancers, sat alone in his lodgings. Careless and light-hearted, as averse to reflection as any mortal could well be, the time had come when he was obliged to look facts squarely in the face.

His handsome features wore an expression of unusual seriousness, for his prospects certainly furnished no subject for elation.

Assets—he ran over them lightly—a handsome person, expensive tastes, good connections, and that was all. Then the liabilities—innumerable debts, damaged credit, the memory of some few years of a gay, wild life, the ordinary harvest of a plentifully sown crop of wild oats.

He had quarrelled with his elder brother, Lord Radigar, on account of a love-affair with a pretty and portionless cousin; his modest patrimony had long since been dissipated.

Radigar had intended that Gerald should marry an heiress, and had even selected a portly, consequential damsel, the heiress of a Glasgow distiller, who had appeared not insensible to the younger brother's attractions.

Miss McCuaig was still to be had, but Doris Wynyatt effectually barred that prospect—poor little Doris, who turned so bright a face to the world, and whose cheery courage deprived the buffetings of fortune of half their sting.

Doris had been confided to the care of Lady Barbara Streathfield, a spinster of ancient lineage and limited income—a high-nosed, thin-lipped, keen-eyed old lady, whom her nephew Gerald cordially feared and hated. The Gorgon he always called her, regarding her not altogether unjustly as having acted as Radigar's chief adviser against Doris and himself.

Then Captain Braidthwaith heaved a deep sigh, which was almost a groan, as he realised the fact that the only choice which lay before him was between beggary and enlisting as a private soldier, and for Doris nothing remained but Lady Bab's tender mercies, until "the long, dull anguish of patience" had vanquished youth and beauty.

It was very hard. They were both so young, they loved each other so dearly, and life was so strong within them.

Just as he had reached this point in his meditations, a thundering knock resounded through the house, and glancing carelessly from the window, Gerald saw that a smart brougham had drawn up before the door. The whole equipage was perfect in its appointments, and bore an air of unostentatious luxury and fashion.

"And please, Captain Braidthwaith!" cried the lodging-house slavey, "a gentleman in 'is carriage wishes to speak with you."

"Then show him up," responded Gerald, listlessly.

"But 'e is a hinvalid gentleman, and 'e says with 'is compliments, would you be kind enough to step down to 'is carriage."

"Cool enough!" muttered the young man, as he stretched himself lazily, but anything was preferable to his own depressing reflections, and he sauntered leisurely down the stairs.

An obsequious footman threw open the carriage-door.

It was a warm Spring day, but the occupant of the brougham was so covered with costly furs that at first Captain Braidthwaith believed it to be empty. Then he perceived an elderly gentleman leaning languidly back on the cushions.

His overcoat was buttoned closely to his throat, a comforter was wrapped round the lower part of the face, his cap was pulled down very low, a green silk patch covered one eye—in fact there was nothing of the face visible.

"Captain Braidthwaith, I presume?" said a voice so deep and sonorous as to appear manifestly discordant with the infirmities of its owner.

Gerald bowed in silence.

With many courteous apologies for the liberty he had taken, the gentleman explained his errand.

He was a Mr. Vandeleur, he stated, a West Indian, who had come to England for medical advice. Though he had retired from active commercial life, his business interests were still extensive, and he required a secretary. Having heard of Captain Braidthwaith, he imagined that they might mutually accommodate each other.

Gerald hesitated. The offer appeared like a new vision of hope. For the sake of Doris, dared he reject any opportunity? On the other hand, he knew absolutely nothing of business, and he held a very modest opinion of his own abilities.

However, Mr. Vandeleur overruled all his scruples.

The remuneration offered was exceedingly liberal, while the duties appeared to be almost nominal.

He was to present himself each day at Mr. Vandeleur's residence in a fashionable part of the town. A few hours would suffice to write the few letters and execute the few commissions that would be required of him; the remainder of his time was at his own disposal.

Captain Braidthwaith entered upon his new duties with a light heart. Two weeks passed before he found an opportunity of discussing his prospects with his betrothed, but at last a day arrived when Miss Wynyatt contrived to meet him.

"And the Gorgon actually allowed you to escape for an hour?"

"The Gorgon is not so bad as she is painted," laughed Doris. "She has a soft spot in her heart. One day I may be able to teach you to like her."

The lovers, elated by the new vista which hope was opening before them, strolled through Regent's Park together.

They looked into each other's eyes, exchanged tender confidences, while the wine of life ran tingling through their veins, and youth, and hope, and love coloured all existence with roseate hues.

"It's strange Mr. Vandeleur is willing to pay liberally for duties so light," remarked Doris, who was very quick-witted and observant.

"Duties!" laughed Gerald hilariously. "My only duties consist in paying accounts and buying lottery tickets. For a stranger, Mr. Vandeleur has the most extraordinary number of bills to settle. He must be a veritable Croesus, and always pays in new, crisp Bank of England notes. More money has passed through my hands in the last fortnight than I ever had in my life before. He is not quite so confiding as he would like to appear, though. I wondered that he trusted me so entirely until I perceived that as I went on my errands his daughter shadowed me from first to last. She always looks intent upon something else, but I am persuaded that her whole business consists in watching me."

"He has a daughter, then?"

"Yes; a pale ghost of a girl. She is deaf and dumb, but appears to be wonderfully intelligent."

"Have they any friends?"

"Yes, but of a lower class than you would expect to find a man of Vandeleur's culture and refinement associating with. It is one of his whims that I should act as host at his entertainments to relieve him of the trouble; and, though the company may not be very select, it must be admitted that the entertainments are on a scale of unusual magnificence."

"Does he appear greatly attached to his daughter?"

"He idolises her. Twice since I have been with him he has bought her diamond ornaments, and he is now negotiating with Messrs. Goldstein, Chaine and Co., for a necklace worthy of an empress. There she is."

A very handsome open carriage rolled in, in which was seated a lady, clothed from head to foot in black velvet.

She was excessively fair. Her faded blue eyes and colourless flaxen hair afforded no relief to the peculiar pallor of her complexion. Her expression was one of the most languid and listless indifference.

"What a white witch of a woman! She never even looked at you."

"No. I am only her father's humble secretary," laughed Gerald.

"There is something mysterious about it that I don't like. Be careful, Gerald," intreated Doris.

Gerald, however, was of a sanguine temperament.

"I feel as though this were the beginning of fortune," he replied.

The next morning, at Mr. Vandeleur's desire, Captain Braidthwaith completed the purchase of the diamond necklace. The young man received Bank of England notes to pay the large price demanded by the jewellers.

"It's a good round sum to give, but the stones are cheap at the price. I never grudge money for a first-class article," remarked Mr. Vandeleur loftily.

Gerald sighed as he reflected how charming it must be to dwell where money was actually of no moment.

"Miss Vandeleur will accompany you. When she has satisfied herself by actual inspection of the diamonds, you can pay for them. She has an excellent taste."

Miss Vandeleur appeared very cool and composed. She examined the jewels critically, and in her emphatic sign

language professed herself dissatisfied with one of the stones, in which she insisted that she had detected some slight flaw.

Two members of the firm who were present eagerly explained that her impression was quite erroneous.

Grasping the case containing the gems, she advanced toward the light, and then wrote rapidly on her slate—

"I believe I am satisfied after all, Captain Braidthwaith, if you will kindly settle."

The interview had taken place in a private room, behind the brilliantly-lighted shop. Gerald promptly counted down the notes.

"You will find that correct, I believe," he said.

Without taking up the money, Mr. Chaine regarded the young man steadily. A firm grasp was laid upon his shoulder.

"Not so fast, this is once too often, Old Ratch," said a quiet voice, and turning in utter astonishment, Gerald encountered the keen scrutiny of Warren, the most renowned of London detectives.

"What do you mean, sir?" questioned Braidthwaith fiercely. "I do not understand your action."

"I mean that the game is played out; you are caught at last. I arrest you in the King's name, Captain Braidthwaith."

"Good Heavens! This is all a mistake," insisted Goldstein, the senior partner. "Captain Braidthwaith is brother to Lord Radigar, of Redfern."

"I don't care if he's brother to the Archbishop of Canterbury," protested Warren, doggedly. "I can prove that Captain Braidthwaith and Old Ratch, the cleverest counterfeiter in England, are identical. The Bank of England has offered five hundred pounds for his capture, and I mean to have it. Many a turn and shuffle and rebuff has he given me; eighteen months have I been on his track, but he always slipped through my fingers just as I grasped him. Very

clever he has been—that I'll allow."

"If this is any practical joke, you will answer for it!" cried Gerald.

"If you can find a joke in Old Bailey and a trial for felony and forged Bank of England notes, you are about the first that ever did," smiled the detective.

"I appeal to Miss Vandeleur!" exclaimed Mr. Goldstein excitedly.

"And of course you have secured the diamonds?" demanded Mr. Chaine abruptly.

But Miss Vandeleur and the diamonds had both disappeared.

The trial of Captain Braidthwaith was one of the sensations of the day. It furnished an exciting topic of conversation for the clubs. Society revelled in all the details of the affair, and Doris Wynyatt wept until she was blinded and heart sick.

"Gerald, the best and noblest of men," sobbed Doris.

"Gerald was a fool, but he never could be a rogue," insisted Lady Barbara, holding her Roman nose very high in the air.

"It's some terrible mistake, but we have no clue to the mystery," admitted Lord Radigar dejectedly.



"Captain Braidthwaith, I arrest you in the King's name!"

Doris sobbed violently. Lady Barbara surreptitiously wiped the moisture from her keen eyes, and then in atonement for her momentary softness turned fiercely upon her favourite nephew.

"What is the use of being a man if you sit down and do nothing, Radigar? It is your bounden duty as head of the family to clear your brother. Gerald appearing at Old Bailey as a common felon, known as Old Ratch! I wonder you permit it, Radigar?"

Gerald had often accused his brother of miserliness, but to save the family reputation he was willing to spend money like water. Lady Barbara made her nephew's cause so entirely her own that she quarrelled with half her acquaintances, and so systematically persecuted the remainder that it was only by avoidance they could escape the infliction.

The most able counsel in London were engaged for the defence, but from the first the case was admitted to be a hopeless one. Warren was not the man to be easily deceived, and the evidence against the prisoner was most clear.

He admitted having passed the counterfeit notes, he had certainly acted as host at the gorgeous mansion in Curzon Street; latterly he had spent money liberally, though when he had left the Army he was known to have been in difficulties.

He had evidently traded upon his social advantages in order to continue a career of crime. Then he was a criminal of such marked ability that the recital of his clever stratagems actually extorted an unwilling admiration.

As one witness after another was heard, Gerald's brain reeled. He almost doubted his own identity. Could he, Gerald Braidthwaith, really be the clever rogue described.

With a dreary, puzzled look in his handsome eyes he looked around upon the surging sea of curious faces, but when he caught sight of one eager, girlish countenance, which had grown thin and haggard in the agony of intolerable suspense, everything swam before him in the mist that dimmed his eyes.

Later, there came a more terrible moment still, when Gerald Braidthwaith stood, very calm and grave, to receive his sentence, which was the heaviest the law could inflict.

When it was pronounced a woman's voice rang out in a faint, agonised cry, and a young girl, with a face like death, was hastily carried out by her friends.

"That poor child's death will lie at your door, Radigar, and your brother's as well, yet there you sit like a statue. Don't allow yourself to be a Cain, Radigar," insisted Lady Bab vehemently.

Just at that moment Doris entered the room. She held a newspaper, and there was a new expression of hope and courage in her white face.

"I have formed a plan by which Gerald may yet be saved. It may be a desperate one, but the case is desperate. I must be allowed to act according to my own judgment."

"If you can clear Gerald, I will settle ten thousand pounds on you!" cried Radigar.

"Listen to this advertisement:

"WANTED.—Wanted a young lady of good social position as companion to a deaf and dumb lady. Duties light and remuneration liberal. Unexceptional references required. Address in person, No. 36 Berkeley Square."

"I firmly believe those are the people who have ruined Gerald. At least let me try."

That same day a young lady presented herself at an aristocratic mansion in Berkeley Square. She was ushered into a tastefully decorated drawing-room, where a lady and a gentleman, apparently an invalid, were sitting together.

The lady was tall, with dark hair arranged in crisp, picturesque curls and a vivid dash of colour on each cheek, but as she encountered the keen scrutiny of the pale blue eyes, Doris Wynyatt's heart throbbed so violently that it seemed to stifle her.

The gentleman wore a deep green shade over his eyes. He apologised for not rising. He had only lately arrived from South America, and as his health was in a most precarious condition, the dampness of the English climate affected him most unfavourably.

His daughter and only child, being much isolated by her affliction, required a companion, in whom, he gracefully added, they hoped she might also find a friend.

Doris explained that Lady Barbara was willing to give her satisfactory references. She was at once engaged, and requested to come that very day; so before night Doris found herself domiciled beneath Mr. Treherne's roof.

A week passed, and no clue reached Miss Wynyatt. The most decorous dullness reigned in Berkeley Square. The chief duty required of Doris was to read aloud long sermons, upon which Mr. Treherne delivered the most edifying comments.

The girl was devoured by a fever of impatience. If these people should suspect her design her life would not be worth anything. If she failed, what would be Gerald's fate.

She dared not allow herself to think of anything except the present, but, composed and vigilant, watched with the closest attention.

Mr. Treherne questioned her adroitly, and in return confided to her many particulars concerning his friends and business connections, his religious opinions, and his daughter's virtues and misfortunes.

Then Mr. Treherne insisted that his daughter should engage in an extensive shopping expedition. He privately informed Doris that he wished to arouse in his poor Ada some of the tastes natural to her age, sex and station.

She would require a complete outfit. Her affliction rendered Ada ignorant of the value of money. Would Miss Wynyatt kindly carry the purse, in which he placed a large sum in new, crisp Bank of England notes.

It was the custom in their country to pay for everything at once. Would Miss Wynyatt be particular that everything selected was of the very best?

However, Miss Treherne in her choice displayed a luxurious taste rather strange in so unsophisticated a being. She selected silks, velvets, brocades and satins of the richest.

"Send the things out to the carriage and I will wait there while you settle the account," Miss Treherne wrote upon her slate.

Doris promptly requested an interview with the proprietor of the establishment, to whom she was well known.

"Can you tell me if these notes are genuine?" she inquired.

Mr. Payne examined them carefully.

"If not, they are very clever imitations, but I can ascertain for you beyond a doubt."

Part of the goods were sent out to Miss Treherne's carriage, with an apology for detaining her a few moments until the remainder were packed.

When a little later a policeman entered the carriage and arrested her, that lady speedily recovered her lost senses, and gave voluble explanations which were of no avail.

Soon after, the veritable Old Ratch, *alias* Vandeleur, *alias* Treherne, *alias* half a dozen other cognomens, was safely lodged in Newgate.

"I'll give you the ten thousand pounds as I promised. You and Gerald shall be married the day after he is set free, and I am proud to call so brave and noble a woman my sister," cried Lord Radigar impulsively.

"That is just what I always told you. If you had followed my counsel, Radigar, we might have all been spared this misery," insisted Lady Barbara.

A. G. Horton.



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Not Declined With Thanks.

JACK: "I am afraid that if I ask you to be my wife you will treat my proposal as a joke." Molly: "But all jokes are not rejected, Jack."

In a Railway-Carriage.

CHAPERON (meaningly, leaning towards young lady sitting next a young man): "Hadn't you better come this side, love? We are coming to a tunnel." Her charge (whispering): "Oh, no, aunt; one more tunnel, and I am engaged."

Not to His Liking.

"UNLESS you give me aid," said a beggar to a benevolent lady, "I am afraid I shall have to resort to something which I greatly dislike to do." The lady handed him a shilling, and compassionately asked: "What is it, poor man, that I have saved you from?" "Work," was the mournful answer.

She Let the Cat Out.

YOUNG LADY: "I should like to embroider a nice pair of slippers as a birthday present for my aunt." Shopman: "We happen to be quite out of new patterns just now. Wouldn't something else do as well?" Young lady: "Perhaps a cigar-case."

Wouldn't Stay So Long.

SHE: "Papa says that when coming to see me you must not come in a 'bus any more." He: "Really! Does he expect me to walk all this distance?" She: "Of course not. He says all he asks is that you will come in a carriage, hired by the hour."

She Knew the Feeling.

HARRY: "She has jilted me, and I know I shall die. The disappointment will kill me!" Aunt Hannah: "I know how disappointments affect one, Harry. But you will get over it. I felt just as you do now when I set that yellow hen on thirteen eggs and only just got one poor chick out of the lot."

Civilised Barbarity.

MRS. DE FASHION: "What perfectly horrible creatures the Chinese are! I am told that in China the men actually buy their wives." Mrs. De Style: "Yes, isn't it horrible? By the way, when is your daughter to marry Mr. Bullion?" Mrs. De Fashion: "As soon as he recovers from his last attack of gout."

Circumstances Alter Cases.

HE: "Miss Smyth—Clara, I love you. Will you be my wife?" She: "Really, Mr. Brown, this is so sudden. I must have time to—". He (interrupting): "As you please. This solitaire diamond ring will keep until—". She (interrupting him): "As I was saying when you interrupted me, I must have time to at least try on the ring before giving you the answer you wish."

Very Kind Man.

"You say the popular Miss Smith can play the piano. I never heard her." "That's just the point. She can, but she doesn't."

Then He Dodged a Plate.

MRS. SKIMPEN: "I think Mr. Jones must have liked the beefsteak pie. He had two helpings of it." The Tactless Boarder: "Possibly he did it for a wager."

Not Digestible.

"THEM chops were good, mum," said the tramp. "but I allus likes to finish a meal with sweets. Yer ain't got any cakes, have yer?" "I have cakes of soap." "Thank yer, mum. But I never touch 'em."

Tit for Tat.

"EXCUSE my coming to dinner in a business suit, old fellow. My way, you know." "That's all right. You won't mind my giving you a small table all by yourself in the pantry, will you? It's a fancy of mine to do it, old chap."

It Takes a Long Time.

MR. BINGO: "We may as well talk over this question of getting the house painted." Mrs. Bingo: "But, my dear, it doesn't need to be painted for at least a year yet." Mr. Bingo: "True. But you have got to decide what colour you want."

There's a Future Before Him.

"MAY I wake the baby, mamma?" asked five-year-old Johnny. "Why, what do you want to wake her for?" asked the mother. "I want to see if she can cry loud enough to drown the noise of my new drum," replied the small investigator.

But the Doctor Didn't Strike.

MR. MUCHBLEST: "Yes, doctor, I have a frightful cold. But what did you say was your special method of treatment?" Physician: "We strike at the cause or origin of the trouble." Mr. Muchblest: "That's odd. However, you'll find the baby in the other room."

That Was the Reason.

"I THOUGHT you believed in training girls for household rather than business affairs?" "So I do." "And yet your daughter is learning typewriting." "Yes, but that's an exceptional case. The poor girl hasn't enough aggressive independence to be a cook."

Then Silence Reigned Supreme.

SHE: "You know, Reggie, that girls are being called by the names of flowers now, and my sister suggested that I should be called Thistle." Reggie: "Oh, yes, I see. Because you are so sharp." She: "Oh, no. She said it was because a donkey loved me."

He Had—Once.

"TELL me honestly," said the novel reader to the novel writer, "did you ever see a woman who stood and tapped the floor impatiently with her toe for several moments, as you describe?" "Yes," was the thoughtful reply, "I did once." "Who was she?" "She was a clog-dancer."

Occupation for the Unemployed.

"CAN'T you give me employment, ma'am?" said the tramp. "I haven't had anything to do for a month." "Poor fellow. What can you do?" "Well, ma'am, I'm a good watcher. If I could sit out here on yer front porch, an' watch the front gate so's no one could steal it, you'd find I was very content."

Unbecoming When Angry.

"SIR," she said, stamping her foot, "I must beg you to cease all talk of love. I am becoming angry!" "Pardon me," he corrected, with great suavity. "Getting angry. You are not becoming angry." After that, somehow, she kept her temper.



LOVING AN IDEAL ;

or, The Ministering Angel of Paradise Row.

"AND how has Paradise Row been getting on while I have been away, Mr. Constable?" asked the grave-faced "district visiting woman," as Miss Kate Green was generally named.

"You look all the better for your holiday, miss!" said the good-natured policeman sympathetically. He tried to evade the question, deliberately addressed to him. "You had fine weather, and it's wonderful how a change of air 'liven's you up, don't it? Sha'n't be sorry when my turn comes!"

"I expect not!" cried Miss Green, with a look of commiseration. "Your duty is rather trying. But you haven't told me about the people in Paradise Row!"

The constable saw that she meant to have a report, so he spoke plainly.

"What gets over me, miss, is why they give such lovely names to such dreadful streets!" he cried, in disgust. "It isn't only down here where you can see that sort of thing; you can find it in London and in lots of towns! Now, Paradise Row ought to be called—well, it ain't polite to mention the other name and I've forgot what my little boy said as was the Greek name for it! It was Aydees, or something; it means the same only it's more polite to say that than the English word. Well, miss, it's been worse than ever, I'm sorry to say! I think it's the hot weather and partly the new couple!"

"The new couple!" echoed Miss Green, wonderingly. "Are there some people in the downstairs at No. 12?"

"Yes, miss, and they're a bright lot! Only a man and woman, but he's always making trouble with his wife and anybody else that comes in his way!"

"I'm sorry to hear that!" observed the visiting woman, reflectively. "I must see what I can do! Good afternoon!"

The policeman returned the compliment and watched the grave-faced woman down the street.

"It's wonderful what she can do with those brutes!" he muttered, involuntarily feeling his right arm with his left hand, as he recollected an injury received during a drunken affray in the disreputable locality. "But I think that fellow won't be softened! He's a terror!"

Catching a back view of her as she walked lightly along, no one would have guessed that the figure was that of the woman who had heard spoken of as the district visiting woman.

The term conjures up the image of a middle-aged person, slow and sedate of movement—and, well, to cut matters short, the figure of Miss Green was altogether different from that on which the mind would fix. It was the dainty form of a comparatively young woman, perhaps not even thirty, and it did not seem to fit the character. When she turned, the observer saw a face that possessed a grave charm of beauty; there was no doubt that it had been beautiful, but trouble or illness, or both, had changed it somewhat. It was impossible not to be struck by the charm of it, even in its gravest aspect, but when lighted by an expression of sympathy or a smile of encouragement, its power of attraction was very great. This little lady—so some people termed her, for she was of medium height and looked shorter than she was—had obtained a wonderful hold on the worst population of the important southern seaport, and this influence was due to her personality.

No one knew the past history of Miss Green, with the exception of the clergyman in whose parish she worked; everyone believed that she had seen a lot of trouble, but they actually knew nothing. She worked among the poor, helping or trying to help them in various ways, but she never intruded religious ideas. She endeavoured to improve their lot and to inculcate general goodness by example. Her salary amounted to fifteen shillings per week; it was not a large sum, but it sufficed for her wants.

When Kate Green returned to her own little bed-sitting-room, she saw a note lying on the table. Perhaps, if the sun and open air of the country had not bronzed the usually pale face, an observer would have noticed a slight flush. She opened the letter and read it; the letter was signed, "Robert Harding" and, after expressing the hope that she had benefited by the change, informed the recipient that an old woman in a certain street was very ill and had asked that Miss Green would call on her. "It is rather too bad to call for your services so soon," concluded the writer, "but your inherent kindness is responsible for these demands upon you. It will be well for you to spare yourself a little; you were very near to a breakdown when you went away!"

"I must go to see her," mused Miss Green. "But I must select a time when Dr. Harding will not be there! I must not encourage—oh, dear! I wish he would get a better practice elsewhere and leave me to live out my life alone. I feel what is coming, and that will force me to tell him the past! I gave my heart to one man; they tell me that he was not worthy of it, but for me it is different! I cling to the man as I thought he was! It may be, as they have told me, that I loved a phantom, that the man who captured my heart did not possess the qualities with which I clothed him, that I was loving an ideal and not a real man! Ah! Do I not know that? Did not the discovery nearly kill me? Yet I still cling to that ideal, and regret that it was but imaginary! I feel that I gave my love once, and I mourn the loss of the ideal as a bride mourns the loss of her beloved! I have no room in my heart for another, and I would spare Dr. Harding."

Kate Green slowly tore the letter into tiny pieces. She was

somewhat perplexed to know how to divide her time for the rest of the day; she wished to see this sick woman, but she also desired to pay a lengthy visit to Paradise Row, the inhabitants of which she had taken under her special care. She believed that she had done some good there, but a great deal of falling-back may occur in a fortnight and the example of this new couple was not beneficial.

Kate smiled as she remembered the remark of one woman in the Row: "You're like an angel, miss, the rows stop and they all seem to be better, somehow, when you git here!" she had said, and after that incident Dr. Harding and the curate had foolishly nicknamed her "the Angel of Paradise Row" till she had stopped them. But the nickname had spread, and it was used frequently, although not in her presence.

"I will go now!" she determined. "He will be visiting his patients elsewhere, and then I can go into the Row later."

She paid her visit to the old woman, who was greatly pleased to see her again. "It is so nice to have someone to come in and read a bit and make things more comfortable-like," she said gratefully. So Kate Green wended her way homeward with a sentiment of satisfaction; it was an ill-paid office, doubtless, and her work was rough at times, but when she saw the effect of her ministrations in such cases as that of old Mrs. Blount, she felt that she had other remuneration than the mere pittance of fifteen shillings a week!

"I like to think that, if I had married my lost ideal, this is the work which he would have wished me to do—devote myself so far as possible to the improvement of those about me!" she murmured.

Her eyes grew moist, obscuring her vision; and, as she still hurried along, it was not wonderful that she nearly blundered into a pedestrian coming round a corner. "Miss Green!" she heard a voice cry in a surprised tone, and she knew that her little scheme of evading Dr. Harding had been only partially successful.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Doctor!" she cried in some confusion. "I am afraid that I was not taking proper notice of where I was going!"

They exchanged greetings and Dr. Harding asked if she had been to see Mrs. Blount. He looked disappointed when he found that she had already paid the desired visit.

"I am going home for a cup of tea, and after that I must look up my friends in the Row!" she said simply. "I must not let any more time pass without going there! I have been away two weeks and I shall lose some of my influence."

"I do not think so," he cried involuntarily. "It would be impossible for you to lose your beneficent power over——" He stopped abruptly; he had spoken eagerly, but an expression that crossed her face caused him to think that he had uttered his sentiment with too much warmth.

"If you are going to Mrs. Blount, you'll find her pretty well," observed the visiting woman, extending her hand, in farewell.

Robert Harding pretended not to see the outstretched hand.

"I am not going," he said somewhat lamely. "I—I am going your way, and I will accompany you if I may."

Kate Green could not refuse, although she was perturbed. The streets were quiet and they walked for some distance in silence.

"I do not like the idea of your going to the Row quite alone just now, Miss Green!" suddenly observed the young medical man uneasily. "I hear ugly rumours from that unsavoury quarter, and you must really be careful! A case of diphtheria was taken from there two days ago, and I believe there are worse dangers than disease to be encountered."

"I am not afraid, doctor," was the tranquil rejoinder.

"But you must be cautious," he urged. "You owe it to those who—to your friends, I mean. And then," he added, as an idea occurred to him, "if you were incapacitated in any way, your usefulness would be nullified or at least greatly decreased."

He felt quite glad that this idea had flashed across his mind; it was such a splendid argument and it covered his own anxiety on her account.

"I am always careful," she told him, and with that he had to be content. Neither spoke till they reached the door of the house in which she lived. She waited for him to raise his hat in leave-taking, but he hesitated, then boldly looked her in the face and asked:

"May I come in and speak to you?"

So the critical moment was at hand! Well, it was best that the ordeal should be faced. She bowed and led the way into the landlady's small parlour, the use of which was granted her for the reception of an occasional visitor. She stood on one side of the little round table and he faced her on the other. He won her admiration by his manly frankness.



The man let go his hold of her, and the stick fell to the ground with a crash. "Kate!" he gasped, "you here?"

"Miss Green, will you give me the right to accompany you on your visits to the Row? I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, when I took up this practice three months ago. As my wife, your sphere of usefulness would not be lessened, at least. Forgive my abruptness, but I cannot find many words. My heart is too full!"

She gazed at him with compassion and with a little thrill at her heart which surprised her. She was sorry for him; and she was glad that she had heard his confession. Yes, glad! How paradoxical, she thought!

She never exactly knew what she told him, but she conjectured that she bared some of the past. Her first clear recollection was of a vehement protest from him.

"It is not fair," he cried with fierce pleading. "You are deceiving yourself by revering a mere vision, and you are not just either to yourself or to others—to me! You are sacrificing yourself to a shadow! You are denying happiness to yourself and to the man, whoever he be, who would find his sweetest occupation in watching over you! It is wrong, it is even selfish!—to waste on a vision the power of love which is implanted within you by your Maker! No, no! I will not take your answer now! I will ask you again one day!"

The strong man quivered in his agony. The woman remained standing, outwardly like a statue, but inwardly agitated by strange and violent emotion. He caught her hand, raised it to his lips, and hurried from the apartment, his last glance at her showing him the same motionless, grave-visaged woman, as rigid as if carved from a block of marble.

An hour later, when the visiting woman arrived at the entrance of the blind alley known as Paradise Row, the appearance of her eyes indicated weeping. Otherwise, she was as unruffled as usual.

It was curious to watch her progress from house to house; she did not enter them on this call, but spoke to the women at the door, making earnest inquiries concerning the children, or whether this or that trouble had been overcome. She knew something about them all, and she gained a few words of genuine thanks from most of these disreputable denizens of the Row for her solicitude and thoughtfulness. She passed along fearlessly to a place where the police did not care to venture singly. Even the rascally men, loafing against this or that doorpost, gazed with awe and admiration at her, although not one of them would have hesitated to attack and rob any other woman either there or in the more open thoroughfares of the town.

The power which she possessed over these people was shown when she stood before the closed door of No. 12 and was about to knock.

A man reclining lazily against the opposite wall suddenly straightened himself and hastened towards her with a warning on his lips.

"I wouldn't go there, ma'am," he said earnestly, and it was noticed that his agitation was so pronounced, that he actually took his pipe out of his mouth in order to speak plainly—a most uncommon occurrence! "You see, the new party ain't 'xactly as perlite as he ought ter be! He's very wilent sometimes, and he knocks her about!"

Her was doubtless meant to signify the violent party's better half. Miss Green, remembering that the speaker himself had more than once been guilty of playfully attacking his wife, felt that the new tenants of No. 12 were very rough. Just a little tremor affected her, but after a moment's hesitation, she smiled and replied firmly:

"It's very good of you to tell me. Still, I must not permit my feelings to stand in the way of my duty."

The man grumbled something about "If you git hurt, don't say as I didn't tell yer," and retired. Kate Green, her heart beating a little more quickly, knocked at the door.

It was one of those small houses where the door opens direct into the front room. Kate, listening for a response, fancied she heard a sound from the back room; accepting this as a rough invitation to enter—by no means an uncommon experience—she turned the handle and went in, closing the door behind her.

The apartment was empty. The door leading to the back room was open, but that, too, was empty. The stairs leading to the upper rooms were masked by a door in the back room and from this direction Kate heard sounds that filled her with dismay.

Some kind of a struggle was taking place. The man was probably beating his wife! Kate was about to return to the front door to call for help, when a cry of pain from a woman caused her to pull open the door masking the stairs and quickly mount the steep steps. In the upper back room, which was devoid of furniture save a rickety cane-bottomed chair, she saw a woman on her knees, her back to Kate, struggling in the grasp of a man who held both her wrists with one hand while his right arm was above his head, swung back ready to deal the woman a terrible blow with a heavy stick.

His face was partly hidden by a heavy moustache and beard, which, like his hair, was unkempt; his eyes were bloodshot, his features distorted with passion. It was a spectacle to make any woman quail, but Kate Green, with a half-murmured prayer, sprang forward and gripped his uplifted arm.

"Hold!" she said firmly. "What are you doing?" "I'll show you what I'm doing," cried the man hoarsely. "Who are you to come interfering? I'll serve you as I was going to serve her, then you'll know what I'm going to do!"

He threw the woman to the floor, seized Kate by the wrist and, with a quick turn that caused her to cry with pain, forced her to her knees. Death seemed very near to Kate Green at that moment; she saw the terrible weapon that would stretch her lifeless when it descended; she was powerless to arrest it! Ah, if Robert Harding had had the right to accompany her!

Then two things happened simultaneously—two things which Kate Green accepted as an answer to that half-murmured prayer for help. The man's eyes fell on a little golden cross which Kate wore; it was attached to a strong ribbon round her neck. And in the same instant Kate saw a scar on the man's right brow and she cried aloud, in an agonised tone: "Frank! Frank!"

As though confronted by the vision of an avenging angel, the man slowly released his grasp and stepped back, allowing the stick to fall to the ground with a crash. The face, inflamed with rage and drink, turned pale; the fierce light in his eyes gave place to an expression of mingled fear and shame. He stepped backwards, his hands half-raised as if to keep her away, till his back touched the wall.

"Kate!" he gasped. "Kate! You! Here! No, no, it is not Kate; it is her shadow, come to punish me! Mercy, mercy!"

This man, who a moment before would have shed blood without thought, fell on his knees and implored clemency. Kate had risen to her feet. The positions were reversed!

He cowered before her; she gazed at him, half-comprehending, half dazed. To such a low pass as this had come the man to whom she had given her love when barely a woman! His forgery and flight had affected her career by a kind of reflex action; people had thought that it was to take her about and give her presents that he had overstepped his income and had done wrong, so she had had to leave the old place and struggle to begin life afresh! What a struggle it had been!

She had forgiven him, but had clung to the ideal, and the sight of this wreck of a man forced home the lesson which she had begun to learn that afternoon. Was it fair? Had she any right to cling to it and to mourn for what had never existed? Was it in accordance with the will of the Great Ruler? Her train of thought was interrupted by the man who cried in agonising tones:

"I wronged you, Kate! Say you forgive me! Say you forgive me and I will try to make amends! I swear I will! It is all clear to me now; I never saw how vile I had been till this minute. Let me stay in the world a little longer and I will make amends!"

A sob rose to Kate's throat. The woman had scrambled to her feet and had hurried down the narrow stairs to the street, to seek refuge, careless of the danger of her rescuer.

Kate choked back the lump in her throat and spoke gently, forgivingly.

"I forgive you, Frank, for the sake of what you once were! I will not say 'what I thought you were' because I like to think that I was not mistaken in the beginning! Get up and keep your word! It is not I who have power to let you live or to cut short your life, for I am mortal flesh and blood, as you are! Come, let me clasp your hand for a seal of the promise just made!"

She held out her hand, he stood erect and held his behind him.

"No!" he cried. "I am not worthy! This hand has done wrong; even now the police may be on my track. I—"

The door at the foot of the stairs was flung violently back and the voices of men were heard. The man looked about him like a hunted animal.

"They are after me!" he cried in a raucous whisper.

"They'll drag me to prison! Where can I go?"

Kate stood in front of him, her back to him and her face to the door, as if to protect him. In her agitation she scarcely knew what she was doing. Dr. Robert Harding entered, followed by two constables.

"Kate!" cried Harding gladly. "Thank Heaven you are safe!"

Then he remained motionless, as did the policemen, not understanding the strange scene. The rescued woman had shouted that he was murdering the district visitor, and Robert Harding, hastening to the Row, in order to be near Kate, had heard these awful words and had ran thither, meeting two constables who were going to the same house to arrest the man for highway robbery with violence. And now they saw the district visitor ready to protect him!

An exclamation from the three men and a crash behind her caused Kate to turn. The man had fallen to the ground in a fit.

They carried him to the next room where a wretched bed afforded a slightly more comfortable resting-place. Harding attended to him, assisted by Kate, while the policeman looked on stolidly. After five or six minutes the constables left, intending to keep guard outside till Dr. Harding should summon them. This he did half an hour later; during the interval as they watched the motionless figure on the bed, Kate told him the history of her visit.

"You need not trouble about your prisoner," said Dr. Harding gravely. "He has escaped and has gone to obtain a free pardon from a Merciful Judge."

And Kate Green, with one hand in those of Dr. Harding, wept for the man who had caused her so much suffering. But the bitterness was tempered by the feeling that a new and brighter life was opening before her!

G. Merriam.

"You've been losing flesh lately, haven't you?" "Yes, I've been shaving myself."

"Who was that lady you spoke to?" "That's the lady that lets my mother go out Thursday and Sunday evenings."

"POETRY doesn't pay nowadays," remarked the long-haired lodger. "Neither do poets," replied the landlady coldly.

CASHIER: "But why do you object to bringing in a friend to identify you?" The Man: "Well, you see, the cheque is for only £12, and he'd be sure to want to borrow ten of it."

MRS. COBWIGGER: "I bought a necktie here yesterday, and the one you sent home wasn't anything like it." Haberdasher: "The one we sent, madam, was picked out by your husband a month ago, in case you ever bought one for him."

CHOLLY: "Well, old fellow, I asked Miss Amy last night to marry me, and she declined." Goslin: "Did she deliberate, as though hesitating to pain you?" Cholly: "No; she produced her negative by the instantaneous process."

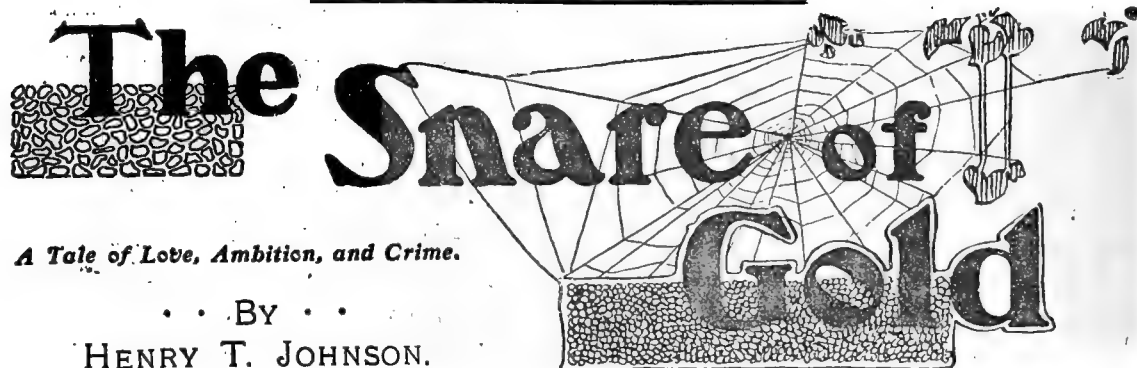
BURIED STATIONS COMPETITION.

Up to the time of going to press it has unfortunately been impossible to finish checking all the attempts. A list, however, has been prepared of all the words admissible so far as the checking has gone. This list is not necessarily a complete one, as further words may be added as other attempts are gone through. The names of the winners will appear next week.

1.—Over, Hilgay, Heather, Cam, Seven Sisters, Sandwich; 2.—Endon, Daybrook, Hockley; 3.—Hay, Preston, Pant, Awre, Hay, Ayre, Five Ways; 4.—Tain, Knock, Llong, Dore, Eye, Shaw, Hyde; 5.—Halfway, Horse and Jockey, Hay, Fulwell, Ayre, Fishponds, Hythe, Ayre; 6.—Lye, Ash, Dover, Waterfall, Sandy, Banks, Ayre; 7.—Eye, Brown-down, Ore, Capel, City, Ince, Manors, Willbrook; 8.—Mallow, Rosemount, Ashbury, Sandy, Cornwood, Nigg; 9.—Hay, Wressle, Wreay, Starcross, Over, Eridge, Round Oak, Honor Oak, Victoria; 10.—Errol, Shotts, Donamon, Awre, Morningside, Par, Earley, Ewell, Awre; 11.—Four Crosses, Four Stones, Willington, Umberleigh, Claxby; 12.—Conover, Manuel, Langho, Tain, Botanic Gardens, Peartree; 13.—Float, Newry, Verwood, Carrick, Lymm, Ore; 14.—Hay, Over, Cliffe, Seaside, Awre, Looe, Awre, Angerton; 15.—Church, Doune, Valley, Awre, Three Counties, Privett, Row, Bridge; 16.—Ayr, Rookery, County School, Boyle, Towyn, Birr; 17.—Horseleap, Highgate, Torrs, Crosshill, Sandai, Hawes; 18.—Verwood, Twenty, Ore, Crewe, Briggs, Lye, Swansea; 19.—Hayle, City, Southgate, Llong, Bare Lane, Awre, Flint; 20.—Box, Tain, Dover, Twenty, Rye, Ferns, Seedy; 21.—Haigh, Talk, New Buildings, Soho, Oyne, Pwllheli; 22.—Post Office, Methil, Morriston, Travellers Rest, Wemyss Castle; 23.—Rye, Cole, Lower Ince, Diss, Heywood, Notton; 24.—Moira, Guyhirne, Ashley, Hurn, Birr, Grotton; 25.—British Museum, Tain, Coalport, Worcester, Abbey, Olton, Belleek, Ware; 26.—Quorn, Cam, Kilwinning, Mount Vernon, Fleet; 27.—Stoats Nest, Plains, Recces, Gordon, Hoyland, Holme; 28.—Roade, Lye, Greystones, Shap, Lye, Triangle, Haigh, Brightside, Thurso, Row, Moss; 29.—Hope, Freshwater, Lye, Newhouse, Ayre, Leigh, Wells, Ore; 30.—Leigh, Ningwood, Awre, Great Coates, Reddish, Paignton, Crosby; 31.—Ore, Quin, Bluestone, Ayre, Brill, Praise; 32.—Awre, Saddleworth, Looe, Penns, Theale, Ingham, Boston, Bow; 33.—Torre, Grange Con, Radcliffe, Lye, Manors, Ore, Finedon; 34.—Biggar, Legacy, Hanley, Hadleigh, Dinmore, Ore, Ore, Llong; 35.—Tain, Point Pleasant, Sway, Diss, Row, Ewell, Lydd, Rye; 36.—Aby, Bourne End, Hay, Hayle, Torre, Worstead, Wardhouse, Croft, Birr, Knowle; 37.—March, Gales, Broughton, Wreay, Diss, Over; 38.—Forden, Hatch, Arley, Grafton, Ash, Liss, Harold Wood, Lymm, Tain, Haigh, Leigh; 39.—Duns, Awre, Lenton, March, Twenty, Risco, Counsell, Par; 40.—Clara, Haworth, Idle, St. Mary's, Schoolhill, Ford, Ore, Diss; 41.—Giant's Causeway, Leigh, Bray, Worle, Dover, Dess, Ore, Godstone, Stow, Awre; 42.—Trew, Awre, Roby, Hyde, Peartree, Tivoli, Islay, City; 43.—Eaton, Currie, Street, Kentish Town, Ayre, Littlemore; 44.—Ingrow, Nailsea, Merton, Hook; 45.—Port, Newbridge, Reston, Lenton, Haigh; 46.—Enzie, Amotherby, Hatch, Woodend, Paignton, Eye, Ince, Row, Llong; 47.—Worthing, Selling, Cattal, Tinteru, Sale, Willington, Rye, Awre; 48.—Rhyl, Ayton, Ryde, Theale, Rayne, London Bridge, Denton, Lyne; 49.—Llong, Roade, Leeds, Patrick's Well, Eston; 50.—Swine, Minster, Ore, Rye, Ennis, Wreay; 51.—Awre, Llong, Crewe, Tal-y-Cafn, Sale, Rigg, Penns, Cole, Lye, Gales; 52.—Oyne, King Edward, Skares, Hose, Victoria, Ewell, Liss; 53.—Reading, Poole, Awre, Twenty, Lea, Looe; 54.—Brynn, Penicuik, Leigh, Awre, Little Mill, Boyle, Pottton, York, Awre; 55.—Trinity, Church, Ludlow, Hatch, Arley, Peel; 56.—Wreay, Diss, Cove, Lymm, Oldcastle, Stokesley, Frome, Oyne, Schull; 57.—Crick, Lea, Senses, Leven, Wick, Leigh, Bold; 58.—Battle, Trooper's Lane, Twenty, Ford, Leigh, Leven; 59.—Hay, Rushall, Awre, Oyne, Bow; 60.—Nigg, Ardleigh, Manuel, Ayre, Leigh, Leeds, Trew, Leigh, Pill; 61.—Awre, Bay Horse, Hose, Wreay, Ewell, Leigh, Ince, Errol, Rye; 62.—Ayr, Cove, Bushey, Roath, Smallthorne, Leigh, Peartree, Over; 63.—Haigh, Old Leake, Deal, Waterfall, Errol; 64.—Wryde, Ore, Downhill, Pill, Llong, Over, Eye; 65.—Standon, Bridge, Lye, Leigh, Rushall, Rayne, Looe, Port; 66.—Wreay, North Road, London, Biggar, City, Roade; 67.—Par, Looe, Twickenham, Ferry, Toward, Richmond, Eskbank; 68.—Biggar, Rye, Tain, Theale, Kinsale, Ewell, Knowle, Awre; 69.—Valley, Rayne, Torre, Settle, Wetherby, Cam, Slough, Bridge, Dover; 70.—Stoke, Lye, Ardleigh, Peel, Roughan, Reddish, Lymm, Coal, Notton; 71.—Fareit, Wreay, Earley, Knowle, Ennis, Lydd, Tresmeer, Leigh, Awre; 72.—Ayr, Wreay, Fawley, Holme, Ayre, Thurso, Ongar, Tain, Rye, Rye.

GRAND SERIAL STORY.

The Snare of Gold



A Tale of Love, Ambition, and Crime.

.. BY ..
HENRY T. JOHNSON.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS SPLENDID STORY ARE:

GEORGE GELDART, a former prosperous City merchant, supposed to be dead, and now known as "Old Mystery."
ERIC GELDART, his elder son, who conspired to kill his father, thereby coming into his property. He is elected as an M.P.
RONALD GELDART, the younger son, who has been disinherited because he has been falsely accused of robbing his father.
CLARE ARMITAGE, the adopted sister of the two brothers, and who is betrothed to Eric.
BOANERGES BLAGDON, the traitorous partner of old Geldart, whom he has cheated in business, and who plots with Eric to murder him.
SAMPSON SCRIMSHAW, company promoter, who befriends "Old Mystery."
MR. STANYER, an Australian financier, who gives "Old Mystery" the post of English agent for his business.
MADELEINE LORRAINE, daughter of Lord Lynton, who is beloved by Eric Geldart.
PHYLLIS DAVENTRY, typewriter to Scrimshaw, who takes a fancy to "Old Mystery." She is rescued from Hooligans by Ronald Geldart.
JACK WIDDICOMBE, cousin to the brothers Geldart, and who is engaged on "The Meteor."

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. A Rescue on the River.

AGAIN that cry came nearer, nearer.

For Ronald was round the bend, and, still pulling, for dear life, glancing over his shoulder he saw that punt drifting down towards him, broadside on, with no river nymph this time to guide it!

Fiercely, frantically, he plied swift, strenuous strokes. For dear life? Yes! he was pulling now for her dear life. One—two—three moments, three swift, herculean strokes—he was past the drifting punt, there ahead of him was her face like another lily on the bosom of the stream.

"Hold up for just one moment!" he shouted. "I shall save you!"

Ere he had finished speaking his boat was alongside her. He scrambled into the stern, leaning overside he seized her with one strong hand, then steadying the boat, resolved to save her at all hazards, whether he lifted her out or went in with and swam out with her.

"Keep steady!" he cried. "You're quite safe. I'm holding you!"

But he had no easy task, for he soon learned what had happened.

A clinging, winding wisp of weeds had twined around her, and supporting her with one arm, leaning over the gunwale with his pocket-knife, which he had opened with his teeth,

he had to cut away the slimy, tenacious, cord-like bands; but it was done at last.

Using all his strength of limb and all his skill in watercraft, he had dragged her into his boat, placed her drenched and exhausted on the storm cushions, once again had saved her life.

So it was fated they should meet and that their meeting should be fraught with what would insure remembrance. She seemed to realise that fully as voluntarily as he, with such sweet docility she placed herself in his hands and obeyed his guidance. It was Kismet; she had neither the power, and she could not conceal from herself the pleasing truth—she had not the inclination to rebel, even to resist.

He sculled her back down stream to the little cosy, not too fashionable river-bank hotel where he was staying, a quaint old, red-brick building standing in pleasant grounds and gardens, covered with trellis work that wanted roses, red and yellow, clambered over, and gave her in the charge of a motherly hostess.

An hour later Madeleine, clad in comfortable attire, which, if it did not exactly fulfil lovely woman's many requirements in the matter of fit and style, was by no means unbecoming, and to his eyes she would look sweet in anything, seated opposite him at a tea-table beside the open window looking on to the flower-spangled lawn, and beyond it the limpid, bough-reflected river, the river that Ronald, who had always loved it, now adored since it had given its fairest nymph into his arms.

Ronald, too solicitous for her to think of aught beside, had sent a waterside man in quest of Miss Lorraine's punt, and a little later that worthy individual appeared at the open window, hat in hand, to inform the lady with many tugs at his forelock, that he had brought the punt back safe and sound without a scratch, pole cushions, luncheon-basket, and all.

"Oh! and my book—my book!" said Madeleine.

"Yes, marm, there were a book, which I brought it along," and he handed through the open window a daintily-bound volume, and his fidelity being substantially recognised by Madeleine's companion, he tugged that forelock in his direction.

"I'm so glad it's saved," said Madeleine to Ronald, "it's the best book I've read."

"Really!" he remarked, "may I ask the title?" and she answered:

"It's 'Flotsam and Jetsam,' a collection of complete stories and lyrics by the new man."

"The new man?"

"Yes, quite my favourite author, I'm rather enraptured with him."

"Happy man!" said Ronald ecstatically, and she went on, with a radiant smile lighting her lovely face:

"You've surely heard of him—his name is Harvey Bligh."

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Gold for Gilt and Gilt for Gold.

LORD LYNTON was hard up. That is, in his sense of the word, for one can be hard up in a variety of styles.

Fitz-Crescus, born in the purple, with a silver spoon in his mouth and cradled in rose leaves, finds himself shockingly pinched when his extravagances have reduced his income to within five figures; whereas Jenkinson, of the Cosmopolitan Bank and Camberwell, dreams that on five hundred a year he could banish care from the vocabulary.

And, by the same token, Fitz-Crescus, with a list of debts totting up to, say, fifty thousand pounds, never lets a thought of them disturb his nightly dreams, while poor little Jenkinson will lie awake listening to the church clock telling the slowly crawling hours, thinking with horror of that twenty pound bill to be met upon the morrow.

But agricultural depression, the death duties, and other matters, had reduced Lord Lynton's fortunes materially, though he was some distance removed from penury. It was beginning to be whispered of him that there was a good deal of his paper about, which is a bad thing to be said of a man or a theatre.

Therefore, in his extremity, Lord Lynton had approached Mr. Scrimshaw.

Now, different men had different ways of approaching Scrimshaw. Lord Lynton's way was that of a cavalier—patronising, indeed, condescending.

No doubt he thought it didn't matter, but, as a matter of fact, Scrimshaw had a way of dealing with people according to their way of approaching him, for this Napoleon of finance, like his prototype of Austerlitz, had his vanities.

Lord Lynton, on Geldart's introduction, had first repaired to the Cosmopolitan Trust and Exchange Limited as a speculator.

He would have repudiated the term "a gambler," for it was his habit at the meetings of the Mutual Improvement Societies, the Mechanics Institute, and kindred institutions at Little Claverton and elsewhere, to wax fiercely eloquent against the besetting vice, whether it took the form of cards, or dice, or race betting.

But purchasing stock, dear me, that was an investment, the investment underlying and stimulating the commercial and industrial energy of the country, and buying that stock to sell again at a profit, that was fair trading, and trading was the backbone of the Empire; and running an account with a dealer in "differences," paying or receiving, according as the balance stood on a given date, this, of course, his lordship would have argued, was a mere development of ordinary business.

Thinking that with his experience and his sources of information he could make money out of the Cosmopolitan at this game, he played—and lost, played high—lost heavily, then played rashly, with the result that notwithstanding his contention that his transactions were business dealings, utterly distinct from gambling or anything so vicious, his experiences very much resembled those of a punter out of his depth, and his feelings were frequently allied to those of the man who, rising in the grey dawn from his chair, staggers wearily across the card-littered floor—"Hard Hit!"

So that later Lord Lynton resorted to Mr. Scrimshaw in another capacity, still cavalier, condescending, patronising, intimating that he must have a little money, a few thousands, to tide him over till his rents fell in. Of course he could get it from friends, but he didn't care to be under an obligation to anybody.

"So you see, Mr. Scrimshaw," he added, accentuating the "Mister" by way of emphasizing that he was addressing an inferior, "I came along to you. You know the detail work which I've never had to trouble myself with in these matters, and you may as well have your so much per cent. as anybody else, and I understand from Geldart that you combine this sort of thing with your business."

"Oh, yes, my lord," laughed Scrimshaw; "all's fish that comes to my net." And he whispered to himself, "and when the bait is gold they come in shoals."

"I don't know that I particularly care to be compared with a fish," said the Viscount, "and I don't know what on earth you're muttering. What I want to make clear is I want some money, between thirty and forty thousand, and I must have it soon, in fact I must have a few thousands at once. You and my lawyer fellows can fix up the details; they have most of my deeds in their keeping."

"A few thousands at once," Mr. Scrimshaw was thoughtful. "What's the immediate security?"

"I tell you it's no good talking business to me; my lawyer fellows do all that."

"Well, will your lordship make an appointment for me to meet them?"

"Oh, that can be done, I suppose, but, don't you see, my good man, I want a few thousands at once."

"Oh, I quite understand that," said Scrimshaw; "indeed, I meet so many people who want exactly the same."

"But Geldart told me you could arrange all these things," said Lord Lynton testily.

"Oh, yes," said Scrimshaw blandly, "on terms." And he named his terms. They were steep; even his lordship, with his contempt for business detail, thought them far too steep.

Mr. Scrimshaw put his cheque book back in the drawer, and Lord Lynton bethought himself that the hills immediately ahead were even steeper, with the result that he requested Mr. Scrimshaw not to be in such a confounded hurry, and in result he appended his signature to certain red stamped blue slips and other memoranda.

"And, by-the-bye, my lord," said Scrimshaw, "an idea has just occurred to me—but, I'm afraid your lordship's a far too busy man to entertain it."

The stony glare in Viscount Lynton's face relaxed, and Scrimshaw went on. "Though there's money in it."

"I am, as you say, Mr. Scrimshaw, tolerably well occupied, but of course one is always ready to consider a remunerative matter."

"Simply this," said Scrimshaw, briskly, watching his visitor. "I am concerned in a small company that's been recently floated for the exploitation of a new bicycle tyre; it's the Pneumatic Intacto."

"Really!" exclaimed the Viscount, with a face of granite, "I am not exactly at that period of life when one is keenly interested in—er—bicycles."

"Jusso," said Scrimshaw; "but I thought you might be interested in the sale of 'em."

"Nor in the sale of them, sir," said Lynton, then struck by an afterthought, "although, of course, as you say, Mr. Scrimshaw, one may be interested in the sale of an article that of itself doesn't interest one in the least; so much depends on the scale of the sale."

"Exactly," said Scrimshaw, "a lot depends upon the scale. The man who kills another man goes to the drop, the man who sets two millions at each other's throats obtains a coronet, sometimes a crown; the man who swindles another scamp, intent on getting someone else's money easily with the three card trick or some other paltry fraud, goes straight to clink, and the man who works a mammoth swindle on the Bourse rolls through the West End in his chariot wrapped in his furs, smoking half sovereign cigars—you're right—it's scale!"

"But how does all this affect the subject?"

"Not at all, my lord. I was merely moralising—a great liberty on my part, especially in the presence of a peer. But I was going to say that this Pneumatic Intacto is a sound affair, and it would be to your lordship's advantage to be upon the Board."

"And perhaps to the advantage of the Board," said Lord Lynton, to which Scrimshaw replied,

"You wouldn't be invited if it weren't."

Lord Lynton rose.

"I think I'll wish you good morning, sir, if you have no other subject to discuss, except an investment I'm not particularly inclined to consider."

"Very well, my lord."

The Viscount moved to the door, then, with a puzzled air, turned, and coming back, said:



the qualification shares, even if I took the slightest interest in your Pneumatic Intacto, or whatever you call it, which I don't. What's the game?"

"Simply this," said Scrimshaw, "the qualification will cost you nothing. Promise to come on our Board and to take up and pay for two hundred and fifty ordinary shares of one pound each at par and I will place a cheque—no, no, not a cheque, bank notes for five hundred pounds—at your lordship's credit at your bankers', or trouble your lordship to do so."

"But what do I know about bicycle tyres?"

"What do you know of gutta percha? What do you know of celluloid? What did you know of the Ping Pong Accessories Syndicate, or the Nubibus Gold and Silver Mines?"

"Scrimshaw, no unpleasant memories, pray! Is this a sound affair?"

"My dear Lord Lynton, the Pneumatic Intacto Company is as unputractable as the tyre which, according to its memorandum of association, it is incorporated to trade in."

"Five hundred pounds! It isn't a lot."

"No, but strike while the iron's hot; buy Pneumatic Intactos with the lot of it; they'll be at a premium within a week of issue, within a fortnight they'll be at a quarter; but don't sell then, there'll be a slump, but don't sell, wait for the rebound which is bound to come; the one pound shares will be at fifty shillings within three months after allotment."

"By Jove, Scrimshaw, you're a wonderful man. I'll think about it."

"You mean, my lord, you'll join our Board. Come, say the word; I have the draft prospectus here shall I add to the list of our directors the Viscount Lynton? Just as you like, my lord; you see you're in good company."

Lord Lynton, glancing at the proof prospectus, screwed up his lips a moment, for a moment blinked his eyes, then said:

"Well, yes, it seems to me a most praiseworthy enterprise, calculated to foster an important home industry, and I think I am fulfilling a public duty imposed upon me by my position in lending my name and my co-operation in the furtherance of its interest."

Then he left Crosby Square with Mr. Scrimshaw's open cheque for five thousand pounds. Mr. Scrimshaw let his lordship out of the private door of his offices, then quietly closing this, went upstairs and knocked at the door on the second floor.

"Come in," said Old Mystery's voice.

He entered, and there was Old Mystery seated at his writing table with huge masses of papers all around him, covered with figures—figures of all kinds, figures of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions, tens of millions, fractions, vulgar and decimal, denoting infinitesimal divisions of the unit, calculations, the very sight of which made the brain recoil and reel.

"Aha, Old Twopenny, still at it?"

"Yes, yes," said Old Mystery, "still pegging away."

"Still the System? How's it getting on?"

"Oh, it's developing wonderfully. I'm almost nearing the end of it, and then, Scrimshaw, we will paralyse the world. The bourses, the markets of Europe shall awaken one morning to find themselves fettered hand and foot, bound round and round in our meshes and helpless at our mercy."

The financier smiled a little sceptically.

"I have known lots of men with systems," he said, "systems for backing horses, for backing this or that jockey's mount, for winning at cards. I've known some men go Tommy Dodd for sovereigns on a system, but in the end the system as a rule breaks down, and it very often breaks the man who built it. I should think that the Casino at Monte Carlo would feel a draught if people left off devising systems."

"Ah, yes, yes!" Old Mystery replied impatiently, "because they are speculating on Chance, or rather outraging the laws

of Chance, coercing Chance to become a renegade and apostate from her own dogmas."

"But, my dear fellow, we are not dealing with cards, and wheels, and things inanimate, we are not dealing with little horses or with big ones either, big ones that have got to obey the whip, the rein and the spur of the man who's got to obey the owner, who very often has got to obey a backer or a bookie."

"The strings we pull are the cables which make a network over the city's heart, and, as we touch those strings, so we awaken chords responsive in the markets of the world, and with these little strings we'll play our little game," and, as the old man spoke, his eyes ablaze with the fervour of his aim and end, to Scrimshaw, it seemed he might have posed for a miser wallowing in shimmering heaps of gold, a fanatic going to the stake for his creed, exalted and transfigured with the passion that possessed his soul.

"All right, Old Mystery," he laughed. "We'll do it right enough, though, upon my soul, I don't know how it's going to benefit us."

"What, not benefit us? To have more gold at our command than Midas or Croesus ever dreamt of, to have our grip on the exchequers and chancelleries of every civilised power! Why, man, our word will hold the armies of the world in check, or let them loose as we will."

"No Tsar, no Pope of Rome, no patriarch will ever yet have wielded such a rod and sceptre as we two shall wield."

Scrimshaw, old Bacon was a fool; it isn't knowledge that makes for power; the man of science, the philosopher, ever so often lives in penury, and often goes down to his grave inside a pauper's shell; it's money that makes for power, gold—gold—gold that men and women worship, that Jupiter himself rained down upon the tower that yielded Danae. We'll circle round them and we'll shepherd them, the great and small into our toils, and then we'll hold them fast, in-meshed and captured by the Snare of Gold!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" Scrimshaw, leaning against the wall, his hands in his pockets, chuckled as he watched and listened to Old Mystery. Then he said, pitching on the table a bundle of blue slips and folded sheets of foolscap, "Enter these in your register and keep them in your safe when you've just looked them through."

"Lynton! Lynton!" said Old Mystery; then it was his turn to chuckle.

"And, by the bye, old man Mystery, when you take this revised proof round to the printers see that they note the addition to the Board."

"Oh, yes, the Viscount Lynton!" said the old man, reading the red ink delineation. "He's not much good on the Board."

"No, but his title is."

"True, true, it's not the head you want, but the coronet he wears on it, and he isn't lending you that for nothing."

"No, Mystery, Lynton does nothing for nothing. You see, if you want the gilt of his coronet you must put down gold for gold; that's the art of financial angling, you fish for gilt with gold, and then for gold with gilt."

"It's like mackerel fishing with a line," said Old Mystery "where they cut a strip from one of the fresh caught fish to bait the hooks to catch others. Gold for gilt, and gilt for gold. Tut, tut, tut! The Snare of Gold!"

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I Will Drag you Down with Me!"

MADELINE LORRAINE reeked little of the troubled waters of speculation in which her father was floundering out of his depth.

Lord Lynton had never quite forgiven his daughter for not being a son, and, although he would have indignantly resented the insinuation that he was wanting in paternal care or affection, he could never quite live down the disappointing reflection that, though by the terms of the patent creating it, the peerage would devolve on his decease on Madeleine in her own right, the family name, of which he was considerably

prouder than of his coronet, would, so far as his branch of the family was concerned, die with him.

My lord belonged to the old school that considered intelligence in regard to matters beyond hats and frocks, babies and housekeeping, unwomanly. Then, again, Madeleine had been staying a deal away from home, and very little correspondence had transpired between them.

Eric Geldart, dropping in to lunch at Lorraine House, was charmed and surprised to find Madeleine at the head of the table, returned from a summer spell up river.

"With whom were you staying?" and she answered:

"With Lady Harwardine, at her place at Taplow."

"Weren't you rather bored?"

"Oh, no!" with a sudden light in her face she seemed to him more winsome still. "One is never bored on the river."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Weren't you very lonely?"

"Oh, dear no!" she replied demurely. "Of course, there was auntie!" And he wondered why on earth she suddenly dropped those wonderful lashes and why the apple blossom tint deepened in her cheeks.

Anyway he was thankful for her return to town, even for the fog end of the season, though he reflected with dismay he would soon be losing her again, and for the thousandth time the question sprang to his brain, "Why not claim her for ever?"

He had never met any woman who stirred his pulse as she did. True, her father was not a rich man, and was getting into difficulties that made it possible that ere long he might become a poor one, but if he had not wealth he had influence.

Besides which, Eric, ever cool and cautious, took to heart the consoling fact that the family estates were entailed, and Madeleine herself was well secured under her parents' marriage settlement and the late Viscountess' will. And then she would be some day a peeress in her own right, and Eric,

besides dearly loving a lord, still more dearly loved this future fair my lady.

After luncheon she left them to their wine and politics, and, though she guessed it not, to the discussion of the Viscount's financial entanglements.

"I don't altogether care for that fellow Scrimshaw," said Lord Lynton. "I don't care for the men who are so very, very shrewd; they're sometimes dangerous."

"My dear Lynton," said Eric, "in business or in politics one's likes and dislikes have to be kept severely in the background."

"I suppose so, but I can't help thinking it was a mistake your council selecting him as candidate for Brixwell after Blagdon's retirement."

"I had no choice." Then Eric checked himself. "You see it was like this: You must have monied men in your party; plenty of men with very little money are active parliamentarians; they may influence, they may even lead, but they don't make a party. A political party without money is a boiler without a furnace."

"And then, I suppose, considering the startling circumstances under which Blagdon retired, you were rather in a corner, and there was a difficulty in finding quite the right sort of man at once? By the bye, what a startling affair that was!"

Eric, shifting uneasily in his seat, kept silence, and Lord Lynton went on—

"Well, anyway, if only those Eldorado Exploration shares go up, as I'm led to believe they will, I shall pay the man off, and wash my hands of him."

If only—only if! What a world of worlds the little words contain!

Later Eric Geldart found Madeleine in the conservatory, a lily amid the palms. She was seated in a wicker rocking chair close to a plashing fountain; the perfect oval of her face, and

(Continued overleaf.)

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her wavy wealth of hair framed in a background of cool and shady green. He seated himself beside her, and, having asked permission to continue his cigar,

"I can't understand," he said, "your not being dull and weary up there at Taplow."

"What nonsense!" she laughed. "What, with my governess cart, my punt, my skiff, my fishing-rods and my books?"

"Oh, yes, your books! What are you reading now?"

She showed him the cover.

"*Flotsam and Jetsam*."

"Oh, another book by that new fellow, Bligh. You seem quite gone on his work."

"You are not an admirer of his?"

"I'm not a great admirer of anything or anybody, with," he went on, fixing ardent eyes upon her, "one glorious exception. I have so much admiration for you, Madeleine, I have none left for others."

"Don't, please," she said, trembling like the aspen leaf close to her, for he had seized her hand.

"I can't help it, Madeleine. There are times when I feel I must clasp you to me, and cry aloud, 'I love you—I love you, Madeleine!' But rising, she slid from him.

"Mr. Geldart," she said, "no more of this, please."

"But, Madeleine, you do care for me, you will care for me?"

"No, no—I'm sorry—I can't."

"But you must—you shall!"

"No, no; besides, there is another girl to whom you are pledged. I have heard of it all; the girl your late father adopted, a Miss Armitage."

"No! No!" he exclaimed angrily, almost fiercely.

"Who has told you that? It is quite false, I swear—"

"Mr. Geldart, you were priding yourself just now on your self-restraint. Ah, here comes my father!"

"Yes," he said, recovering himself, "and we are discussing books. Now, for instance, this fellow, it makes one quite tired to be asked, 'What do you think of Bligh? How do you compare him with so and so?' I begin to hate him."

"Have you read him much?"

"No, no, I've no time to dabble with fiction."

"Then how can you judge?"

"Oh, if I haven't read him I've glanced at him in the reviews. I'll show you something of his I dipped into, I think it's published in that collection. Allow me?"

He took the book from her hand, turned over the pages, read her the passage that had struck him.

"Now, that's very fair," he said, "but it's by no means miraculous." Then carelessly he glanced at the title page. A name was written on the fly leaf in a hand that somehow seemed familiar. "Harvey Bligh!" and it was dated that current year, that current summer month. "Is this his writing?" he said, almost demanded, and Madeleine, blushing, said:

"Yes."

A deeper rose blush mounted to her cheeks, and Eric Geldart's jealous heart began to understand why and how she had passed such a joyous river holiday.

"Then you have met this fellow, Harvey Bligh?"

"I have met Mr. Harvey Bligh," she said, drawing herself up, resentful of his insolence.

"The usual style of literary chap, I suppose?" he went on. "Lean of limb, lank of feature, long of hair, and limp of bearing."

"The very opposite—with broader shoulders even than yours; a face full of sunshine when not grave and thoughtful; an athlete every inch. Why, twice he saved my life!"

Then Eric, who had been merely impatient of the man whom he had never seen, but whom in his heart of hearts once for all he guessed had robbed him of his heart's desire—the love of Madeleine Lorraine, hated him with all his soul and all his strength. So that an hour or so later he left Lorraine House, chafing with impotent anger.

What did it matter that he had achieved success, that there

were hundreds of women, fair to look upon and well dowered, who would gladly have flung themselves into his arms to share in a career of promise, social and political, so abundant. She was his heart's desire, and he felt that he was wooing her in vain.

When their guest had gone, Lord Lynton, fixing a scrutinising look upon his daughter, said:

"Were you and Geldart indulging in a tiff just now?"

"Hardly that," she smiled; "only Mr. Geldart is a trifle self-opinionated and obstinate, and so perhaps am I, so that we occasionally cross foils, but never without the buttons!" and she laughed.

"Strong men generally are self-opinionated; that goes with strength of mind," said the Viscount, "and Eric Geldart is a very strong man."

"The strongest men are not always the pleasantest," answered Madeleine.

"What is pleasant is not always best for us," said Lord Lynton, and he went on gravely: "Geldart has a brilliant future, he is fairly well-to-do, is a partner in a flourishing concern that runs on wheels as it were by itself, and his late father left him a very comfortable income."

"Yes," answered Madeleine, "at the cost of disinheriting his brother, I was told."

"The brother was a bad lot and deserved all he got, and to lose all he didn't get!" said the Viscount; "but it isn't wealth I'm thinking of, though that is necessary to happiness."

"Father!"

"Oh, yes, poverty of purse means poverty of heart. But that man has a political future before him. Someday he'll be a Cabinet Minister. It's on the cards he may be offered an Under-Secretaryship in the lifetime of the present parliament. He has made his mark in the House and in the country."

"People seem rather undecided about him, nobody quite seems to know with which side he and his little band will ultimately throw in their fortunes."

"That's Geldart's generalship, and that's the importance of his force," said the Viscount. "Madeleine, I know he's tremendously interested in you and I should be sorry to see you discourage him."

"Oh, but father, I—I—"

"What do you mean?" asked the Viscount testily and suspiciously, noting the tell-tale crimson in her cheeks.

"You haven't formed any prior attachment—you appreciate your position too thoroughly to indulge in either flirtation or sentimentalities, I trust."

"I mean, father," said Madeleine, with some confusion, "that I am not merely negative to Mr. Geldart. I admire him certainly for his cleverness, and I am interested in his career."

"He is so bold, and in a way so brilliant, and I think he's wonderful to listen to at public meetings and in the House and to read about in the papers, but, personally, there is a nameless something about him that jars on my nerves, and there are times when he is absolutely repellent to me."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" said Lord Lynton impatiently; "he's a splendid fellow! Why, already the Opposition have, through his influence, been made to see the blunder they made in passing me over for the Lord-Lieutenancy without even a solatium, and I've heard a whisper from present Ministerial circles that if anything happens to Lord Brentwood—and his physicians are in daily attendance on him—they will at once recognise my claims. And understand, Madeleine, it is my special wish that you should be particularly polite to Mr. Geldart—my particular wish, remember!"

He left her, and Madeleine returned to her wicker-chair in the conservatory to dive again into the fascinating pages of Harvey Bligh, and, reading him, to dream that once again she was listening to him in the shade of the willows, where foxgloves clustered by the river brim and his mellow voice mingled with the drowsy hum of bees the whisper of the summer breeze amid the quivering rushes and the murmur of the weir.

"Eric!"

A hansom drew to the kerb and stopped, and Clare

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Armitage sprang on to the pavement.

"I've been wanting, oh! so badly, to see you—to have a long, long talk with you."

"Where have you been all this while and why have you avoided me?"

"Tut, tut, Clare; people can hear."

"What does it matter?"

"A deal to me, I assure you! You know I loathe effusiveness and detest a scene."

"Eric!" There were tears in her voice and her reproachful eyes were dim. "I think you are very cold and harsh to me, especially after all that has happened. Ah, me! how soon men can forget!"

"My dear girl!" he said impatiently, "if you have anything to say, by all means write to me; but, for Heaven's sake, don't improvise a dramatic scene in Piccadilly; besides, your hansom's waiting."

"Eric, I must speak with you, I will speak with you, where you choose. I have something to say that has been on my mind, that's been scorching in my mind. Take me somewhere where we can talk."

With an ill grace he gave way, paid and dismissed her cab, and together they turned into a fashionable tea-room and selected a table in an alcove where they could converse without being overheard.

"Now, Eric," she said, "let us once for all come to an understanding."

"By all means," he said nonchalantly; "you don't mind my cigarette?"

"You told me the last time that we met there was nothing between you and Lord Lynton's daughter, and you repeated a promise you had made a hundred times, that I should be your wife, I who helped you to be what you are, who risked so much for you, dared so much for you—Heaven help me!—sinned so much for you."

"My dear Clare, what's done is done."

"I know; and if you'd kept your bargain I should never have complained, however things befel. But you're not doing that—you're turning traitor, cutting me adrift. When I told you what I was hearing, that you were courting Lord Lynton's daughter, you told me it was false; but it was you who were lying, you were at her heels everywhere, you who once were my shadow now are hers."

"Well?" he asked.

"Well! Oh, Eric, think! she doesn't care for you, she wouldn't dare for you what I have dared for you; think before it's too late! Because I swear if you throw me over you sha'n't swim long; I'll tell the truth and the world that thinks so well of you shall know you for what you are!"

"And your proofs?"

"My proofs!" She paused, all the more furious than ever because she was compelled to pause, because she had no answer to that mocking taunt.

"Your ultimatum?" she cried passionately. "That promise you made me a hundred times—is it to be kept or broken?"

"My dear girl, I am a Member of Parliament, therefore you can quite understand I have made innumerable promises. To which particular one do you refer?"

"Eric Geldart, don't mock me!" she said; "for I warn you you are playing with fire. You have made me your tool and you are flinging me away. I have proved to you that I can be docile, useful, even priceless was your term, but I warn you I can also be dangerous. Taunt me with the ease with which you have fooled me and I swear to you that you shall find an enemy as deadly to you, your fortunes and your hopes as ever mortal man encountered."

He smiled scornfully. She was playing his game; it suited his plan best of all just then that they should quarrel, and that he should wrench himself free from all bonds between them.

"I must remind you," he said caustically, "it was you who sought, indeed, insisted upon this discussion. For my part my anxiety is to end it and avoid a repetition."

"You mean you want to be friends again, Eric?" she said hopefully, pleadingly, clutching at every straw of a chance of winning back his smile.

"As you please," he said; so coldly that her heart sank back again.

"You want to get rid of me," she said; "you are tired of me; besides, I know too much."

"Your first two premises I am prepared to grant; the third I unequivocally deny."

She looked him full in the face.

"I know, I know!" she said; "it's Madeleine Lorraine you want—the cold, marble blonde, who, if you win her, will never give you half the devotion I have showered upon you. You know it's true, you traitor! Yes, your brother, whom you wronged, named you Judas, and he was right!"

"And you?" he asked mockingly. "Remember that even had you the power as well as the will to substantiate your story and drag me down, you would have to sink with me."

"I wouldn't care for that, Eric; I may sink with you, but I'll drag you down."

He made a gesture of contemptuous impatience. Her breast heaved, her colour came and went, and with a giant effort of self-repression she went on:

"You think my threats are idle, you think that I, though able to help, am powerless to harm; very well then, from this hour I spare no pains, relax no efforts to find your brother Ronald, and tell him all the truth."

"You Jezebel! you dare not!" he hissed fiercely. But she had swept across towards the door, was already descending the velvet-covered staircase.

For some time he paced to and fro in deep thought. What if she kept her word? Why then—but at all hazards she must not keep her word, her quest must be frustrated and her angry tongue silenced. Even if—well, desperate cases need desperate remedies.

(Another long instalment next week.)

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- Is there fulness in the throat?
- Do you have to clear the throat?
- Do you expectorate frequently?
- Do you sleep with the mouth open?
- Are you nauseated in the morning?
- Do you have aching pains in the limbs?
- Is there pain in the front of the head?
- Is there dropping of phlegm in the throat?

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette.

All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.]

Is it the Same Girl?

A FEW weeks ago "DISCONSOLATE LOVER" told me the story of his meeting years ago with a factory girl, for whom he since developed a tender feeling, but from the day of his meeting till now he has not seen her. "EDNA" now writes to me, on the chance that she is able to help the disconsolate one. Here is her story. Does it tally with that of "DISCONSOLATE LOVER"?

The meeting took place in the Lea Bridge Road, and the girl was working in Homerton. She was with a friend on a day's outing, and both the girls were dressed in pale blue blouses and fawn skirts. One is since married, the other single. "DISCONSOLATE LOVER" will at once recognise if this is the lady to whom he refers, and if so, no doubt will communicate with me.

Edna takes the opportunity to deny the suggestion that factory girls do not read newspapers. "One of the girls in question," she says, "was the daughter of a captain, R.N., the other's father held a good position in the G.P.O. Both were highly educated, and you may be surprised to know that very many girls who work in factories are in similar positions."



Business Girls and Future Husbands.

"My daughter wishes to go into business," writes "MATER," "but I am afraid if she did she might spoil her chances of meeting a suitable young man whom she might marry. Do you think this is likely to be the case?"

No, "MATER." If a girl has the qualities which attract "suitable" young men, she will find them as useful in business as at home. True, the general run of men nowadays do not regard the business woman with any favour, but that is often due to the ungracious attitude of the woman herself. If a girl has the right womanly qualities, they will be better appreciated in business than anywhere, and your daughter is quite likely to meet the right sort of man, as usually girls who have had a sound commercial training make excellent economical wives.



Cross Purposes.

"OURS is rather an uncommon affair," writes "PERPLEXED." "We are two old Eton boys of independent means. Whilst staying at Scarborough for a day or two we met a charming young lady. I just took a casual liking to her, but my friend fell hopelessly in love. The girl, on her part, will not listen to his overtures, but always seems to delight in my company. What can I do?"

As your friend is in love with the girl, and you yourself are not, you should show your friendship by withdrawing yourself from competition. The girl may have taken a fancy to you, but unless you feel that you return it in kind you had better

not have anything to do with it, especially as your friend is already in love.



Early Morning Courtship Not Advisable.

"ANNIE" writes: "My sweetheart and I live in the same street, and he passes our door every morning on his way to his train. Now do you think I ought to walk with him to the station? I have often thought of doing so, but don't know whether it would be a kindness to him or not. Please offer your advice."

"ANNIE" is evidently a most well-meaning sweetheart. However, I don't, as a matter of principle, advise her to walk to the station in the morning. After all, the young man might be induced to lose his train out of desire to remain as long as possible with her, and even if he caught it, love making so early in the morning is not the best prelude to a day's business. I have known love letters which have utterly unfitted many an admirable young man for his day's work. What "ANNIE" might do would be to meet him as he returns at night. That is the time when a man most feels that he wants a little relaxation from business cares, not early in the morning. I am sure if you take my advice you will not regret it.



Actresses' Love Affairs.

"MASIE" writes: "We are two actresses on tour. We are both in love with the same young man. How are we to know which of us he loves best, as he treats us both in the same way? As he sends up flowers and chocolates often, we are sure he means something serious. By the way, is it proper for us to ask him to supper at our rooms after the theatre? We do not see any harm."

Depend on it, it is one of you two that he has taken a fancy to, but as a nice-minded fellow, he would not like to show preference to one while the other was present. As you are both in love with him, naturally you will neither of you wish to give way to the other. Better leave it to the young man to decide. As to asking him to your rooms, we know that amongst actresses ideas are rather different on the matter of propriety to those in general vogue. An actress has so much to do with the opposite sex that she is fairly capable of looking after herself. If the other girls in the theatre do not think it right of you to ask the man to supper, I should discontinue doing so. After all, propriety depends on custom, and even in touring companies there are unwritten laws on such matters which ought to be obeyed.



Life of a Stewardess.

TO BECOME a stewardess on a liner, "ELLA," you would not have to pass any examination. A good education, and plenty of tact and patience, besides, if possible, a knowledge of some foreign language, are the most useful qualities, and would stand you in the best stead on board, when passengers are apt to be very trying. Of course, a stewardess has to go through grades of service, beginning, generally, with the third-class passengers and passing to second and first. The stewardess has principally to attend to the ladies on board, make beds, wait on them with their morning tea or coffee, look after them when unwell, and take care of children.

Stewardesses are generally women of a good class, and often ladies' maids and nurses prove very fitted for the work. The work is perhaps the best of all kinds of domestic service, as a good stewardess is an invaluable servant to a company. As to details and pay, they had best be ascertained from the offices of a company. I believe pay is generally from £3 to £4 per month, and tips are, of course, generously given.

Cynthia



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